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ALSO:

DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT: Opinions and analysis by Joan Acocella, Jiayang Fan, and others.

VIDEO: Photographers gather on Iceland's Jökulsárlón lagoon, jockeying to capture the perfect picture of the treacherous landscape. Plus, on the latest episode of "Comma Queen," Mary Norris discusses the difference between "I" and "me."

HUMOR: A Daily Cartoon on the news, by Kaamran Hafeez.

SLIDE SHOWS: Photographs from a tour of duty with members of the Icelandic volunteer search-and-rescue team. Plus, art works from the Frank Stella retrospective at the Whitney.

PODCASTS: On Politics and More, John Cassidy joins Dorothy Wickenden for a discussion about the most recent Republican debate. On the monthly Fiction Podcast, Deborah Treisman and Lydia Davis talk about a short story written by Davis's father, Robert Gorham Davis, which was published in the magazine in 1943.

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THE MAIL

THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

Kathryn Schulz writes about Henry David Thoreau's narcissism, priggishness, "dour asceticism," and lack of fellow-feeling ("Pond Scum," October 19th). Those qualities were eloquently anatomized by Perry Miller, in "Consciousness in Concord" (1958), and again, by Richard Bridgman, in "Dark Thoreau" (1982). But in contrast to Schulz's piece, which exhibits the same lack of generosity that she ascribes to Thoreau, those books thoroughly engage the complex question of why Thoreau's passion for nature seemed to him to require the (impossible) exclusion of the social world. Anyone who has read Thoreau with sympathy will flinch at the picture of him in Schulz's piece. In response to Thoreau's journal entry dated April 11, 1852—"It appears to be a law that you cannot have a deep sympathy with both man and nature. Those qualities which bring you near to the one estrange you from the other"—one might permit oneself to be repelled or, rather, to think, How extraordinary to be governed by such an economy. When Thoreau writes, "I desire to speak somewhere *without* bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments," it becomes clear that we are not actually excluded. What if Thoreau's intention, as described in the journal entry from August 17, 1851, to "watch nature always with my moods!," required deep solitude?

Sharon Cameron

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Many readers interpret Thoreau's famous misanthropy less as his looking down on people than as his effort to elevate the natural world. Instead of pursuing a narcissistic project, Thoreau might be seen as demonstrating the possibility of stepping out of social ruts. He seeks to place life in the context of history, natural surroundings, and the alternative modes of other cultures. "Walden" makes no claim to consistency or universality. Its author is alive to his personal contradictions. Where he fails, he exhorts us to try for

ourselves to look up from our daily lives and broaden our vision, and he does so in confident and muscular prose, rich with metaphor. Yes, he was sexist, but he was also an abolitionist, a conservationist, and a pacifist who inspired Gandhi. By the way: the only scum floating on Walden Pond is the Walden Pond Scum, a group of kayakers learning Greenland kayaking techniques; I'm a member. We pay tribute to Thoreau's curiosity about Native Americans, whom he approached as respectfully as he did everyone on the "wrong side" of Route 2 from the citizens of Concord, whose closed-mindedness he disdained.

Sanjay Gulati

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It's often a mistake to name single truths when reading Thoreau. He once recalled that the Hindus understood Kabir's poetry to have four senses ("illusion, spirit, intellect, and the exoteric doctrine of the Vedas"), whereas in New England "it is considered a ground for complaint if a man's writings admit of more than one interpretation." One of the "senses" in Thoreau that Schulz misses is the sense of humor. "Especially the transcendental philosophy needs the leaven of humor to render it light and digestible," he wrote. Schulz points to Thoreau's refusal of a doormat for his cabin: "It is best to avoid the beginnings of evil." She comments, "I am not aware of any theology which holds that the road to Hell is paved with doormats." I think he knew how to leaven idealism with a touch of exaggeration. Maybe nineteenth-century Yankee humor is too dry for the modern ear.

Lewis Hyde

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Schulz's critique misses a crucial point about Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government." He argues that the fundamental moral obligation of each person is to follow his or her conscience. This is not a theory of government but a theory of moral obligation. Nor is it a claim of personal infallibility; it is possible that a person who is following his conscience may

encounter someone with a conflicting belief, and that one or both persons may have cause to rethink their position. Thoreau might agree with Schulz that "it is the point of democracy to adjudicate," but only to a point. Majority rule does not adequately settle disputes over personal moral obligation.

Elizabeth A. Linehan

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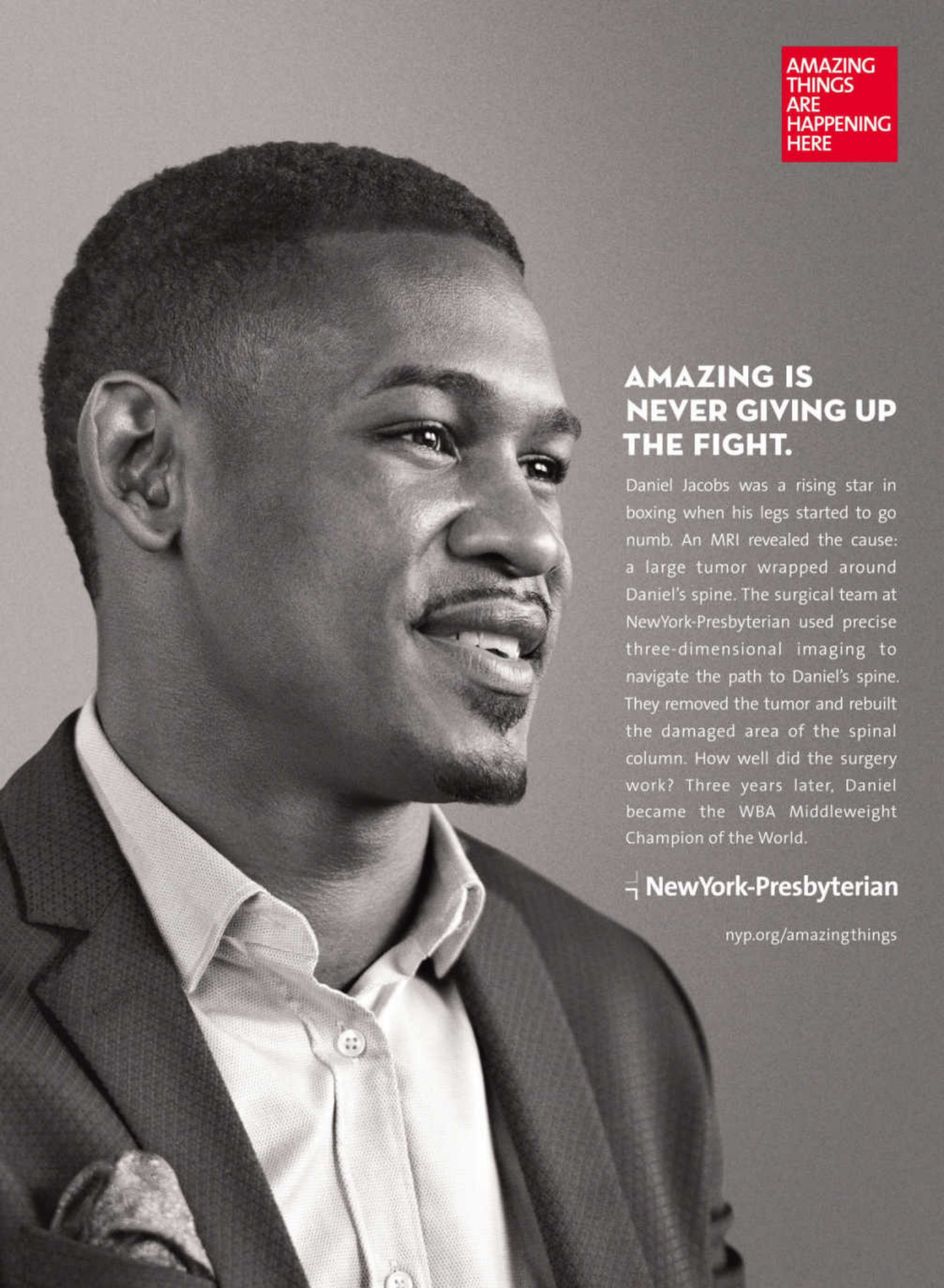
A close, sensitive reading of Thoreau reveals a complex man deeply connected to family and community. He was an eccentric, to be sure, but also a passionate man of genius. One of the lesser-known realities of Thoreau's life was his warm relationship with the children of Concord. Edward Emerson, the son of Ralph Waldo, became concerned by the misconceptions that surrounded his friend—the kind that Schulz perpetuates. Edward, writing in 1917, recalled Thoreau as "the best kind of an older brother," adding that he was troubled "by the false impressions given by accredited writers who really knew him hardly at all." He describes the "humble persons whom the literary men would never find out, like those who helped in the pencil mill, or in a survey, or families whom he came to know well and value in his walking over every square rod of Concord, or one of the brave and humane managers of the Underground Railroad, of which Thoreau was an operative." He also writes that "Thoreau, though brusque on occasions, was refined, courteous, kind and humane; that he had a religion and lived up to it." Schulz's "gotcha" criticism cannot erode the lasting value of contextual reading.

Lucille Stott

Brunswick, Me.

CORRECTION: The subhead of "The Memory Keeper" (October 26th) identified Svetlana Alexievich, the Nobel Laureate in Literature, as Russian. She writes in Russian, but she is Belarusian.

•
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A black and white portrait of Daniel Jacobs, a Black man with short hair and a goatee, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored button-down shirt. He is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is a solid dark gray.

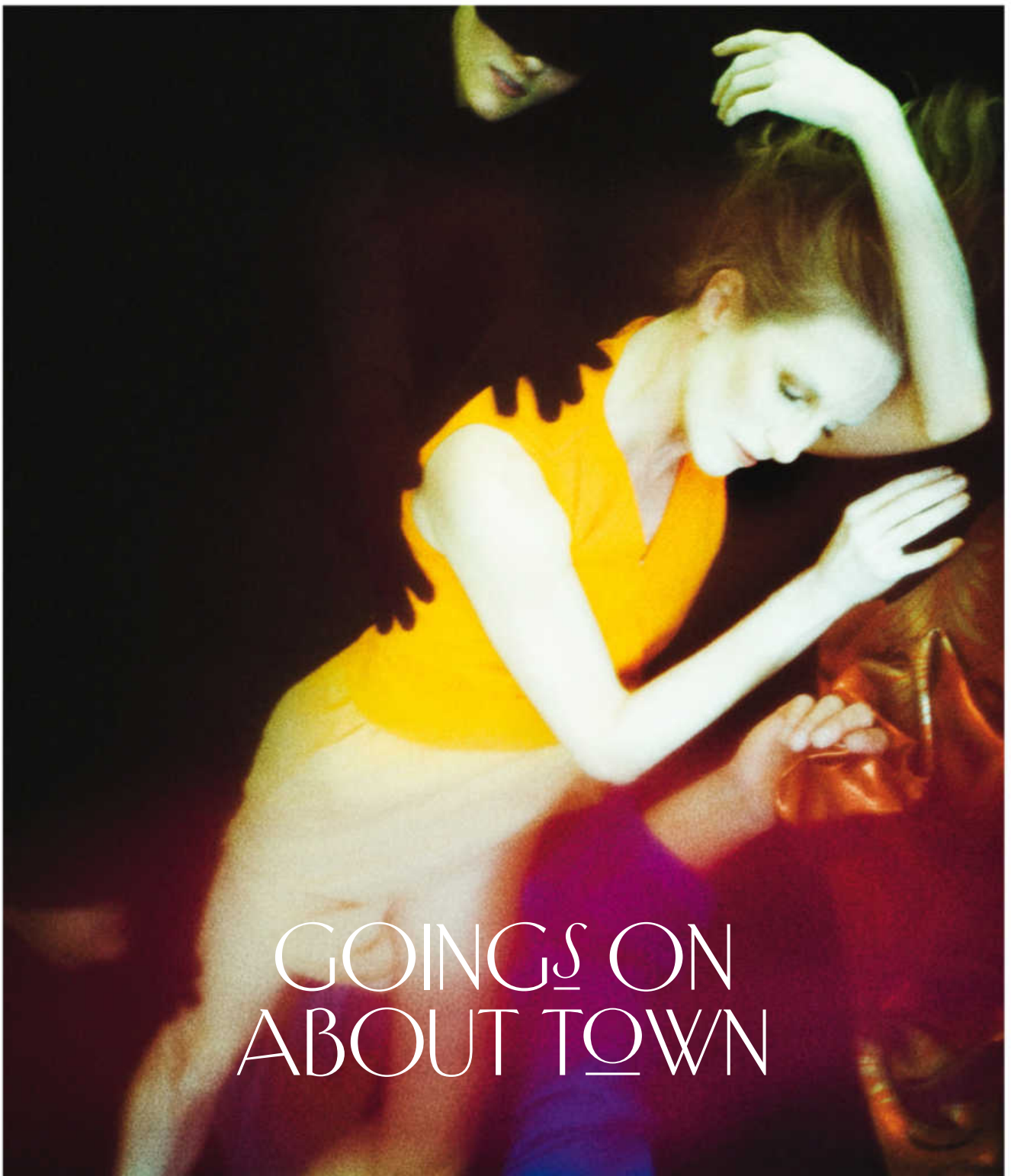
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

NOVEMBER
2015

WEDNESDAY
4TH

THURSDAY
5TH

FRIDAY
6TH

SATURDAY
7TH

SUNDAY
8TH

MONDAY
9TH

TUESDAY
10TH

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, Wendy Whelan retired from New York City Ballet, to bushels of flowers and not a few tears. Perhaps those tears were a bit premature. Now freelance, Whelan gets to call the shots. Her latest gig, "Hagomoro," is a collaboration with her husband, the visual artist David Michalek, who directs the show at BAM. The story, derived from a popular Noh play, involves an angel who loses her magical garment and the fisherman who finds it. The angel, of course, is Whelan; the fisherman is her longtime N.Y.C.B. partner Jock Soto. The score, by Nathan Davis, is for tenor, mezzo-soprano, and girls' chorus, backed by the ICE contemporary-music ensemble. David Neumann choreographed the stately, otherworldly movement, and two life-sized doppelgängers of Whelan were created by the Brooklyn-based puppeteer Chris Green.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MOVIES | DANCE
ART | THE THEATRE
NIGHT LIFE
ABOVE & BEYOND
FOOD & DRINK

PHOTOGRAPH BY IOULEX



CLASSICAL MUSIC



The soprano Marlis Petersen returns to the title role of “Lulu” in a new Met production by William Kentridge.

LORDS OF MISRULE

Expressionist masterworks by Berg and Schoenberg take Manhattan.

FRANZ SCHUBERT COULD BE the official song composer of Lincoln Center: the Viennese master’s extraordinary gift for clear storytelling and hauntingly simple melody has inspired superlative interpretations from such singers as Matthias Goerne (who, last year, performed “Winterreise” in a concert collaboration with the South African artist and director William Kentridge) and, most recently, Mark Padmore. But music by two composers of a later and more complicated Vienna—Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg—arrives this week courtesy of the acclaimed German baritone Christian Gerhaher, who is performing across town at the Board of Officers Room in the Park Avenue Armory (Nov. 10).

Songs by Haydn and Beethoven will provide some cushioning for a program featuring two Expressionist song cycles long associated with female singers: “The Book of the Hanging Gardens” (1908–09) and “Altenberg Lieder” (1912). Each explores sensuality as a prism of the human psyche. In the former, Schoenberg used an intricate sequence of poems by Stefan George that seem to trace the progressively intimate encounters of two youths in a magical garden; for the latter, Berg employed deceptively simple texts by the decadent café poet Peter Altenberg, which arouse images of “measureless sorrow,” “summer rainstorms,” and “the brink of beyond.” Schoenberg, page by page, wades ever deeper into atonality, but his songs often wind up in postludes that, as in the lieder of Schumann, neatly balance out the poetic passions that have come before. Berg’s songs, originally scored for a huge orchestra, leave that classical sense of equanimity behind; each is a borderless, blasted plain in which musical ideas acquire a seething, almost physical presence.

Back at Lincoln Center, Berg’s “Lulu,” previously incarnated in a legendary 1977 production by John Dexter, returns to the Metropolitan Opera in a new staging by Kentridge (beginning Nov. 5). Shostakovich’s “The Nose,” the composer’s brilliant, diamond-in-the-rough first opera, was a perfect vehicle for the director’s début, in 2010; the production was a body slam of two explosively fertile geniuses. But, at Goerne’s “Winterreise,” Kentridge’s feverish animations, projected behind the singer, proved a distraction from Schubert’s gentle drama. Kentridge’s new production will doubtless be another visual dazzler. But will it overwhelm the music? “Lulu,” a work that approaches Puccini in its sheer lyrical power, requires devotion, not assistance.

—Russell Platt

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

Michael Mayer’s staging of “**Rigoletto**,” set in a nineteen-sixties Las Vegas casino, turns Verdi’s drama about badly behaved courtiers into a carnival of American excess. The tenor Stephen Costello, costumed as a no-good, Rat Pack type in an ivory dinner jacket, brings slick charm and ingratiating vocalism to the role of the Duke. Olga Peretyatko’s Gilda is a warm, sweet presence, but it is George Gagnidze who is at the heart of the show, softening his burly baritone to create a surprisingly sensitive Rigoletto. The conductor Pablo Heras-Casado plays up the score’s fierce, high-stakes drama, at times trading its sheer beauty for something more thrilling. (Nov. 4 and Nov. 10 at 7:30 and Nov. 7 at 8.)

• **Also playing:** A long-awaited new production of Berg’s “**Lulu**” by the essential South African artist William Kentridge débuts this week, featuring Marlis Petersen (in the demanding title role), Susan Graham, Daniel Brenna, and Johan Reuter; in the pit, Lothar Koenigs replaces James Levine. (Nov. 5 and Nov. 9 at 7.) • Plácido Domingo, recovering from surgery, is scheduled to take the podium for the next performance of Puccini’s “**Tosca**.” The cast, appropriately, is headed by three distinguished veterans: Maria Guleghina, Marcello Giordani, and Željko Lučić. (Nov. 6 at 8.) • The American dramatic soprano Lise Lindstrom, who made her Met début in Zeffirelli’s extravagant production in 2009, returns to the formidable title role in Puccini’s Chinese fairy tale, “**Turandot**,” leading a cast that also includes Yusif Eyvazov (in his house début, as Calaf), Hibla Gerzmava, and James Morris; Paolo Carignani. (Nov. 7 at 12:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

“Epiphany: The Cycle of Life”

BAM’s latest evening-length collaboration is co-conceived by the video artist Ali Hossaini (who has built a floor-to-ceiling visual experience), the stage director Michael McQuilke, and the lighting and scenic designer Maruti Evans. This immersive tale of death, rebirth, and what lies beyond will be driven by the diverse music of Paola Prestini, Sarah Kirkland Snider, and Netsayi (joined by her band, Black Pressure), setting texts by Niloufar Talebi and Nathaniel Bellows. The work is performed by the Young People’s Chorus of New York City, the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, and the percussionists David Cossin, Thiokho Diagne, and Ian Rosenbaum, all led by the visionary maestro Francisco J. Núñez. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. bam.org. Nov. 4–7 at 7:30.)

Venture Opera:

“Don Giovanni”

The fledgling company has chosen a repertory staple for its first show, but the production concept is a

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bit more daring than that choice implies: the titular seducer (played by the charismatic baritone Philip Cutlip) is here a Catholic priest. Ryan McAdams conducts a thirty-two-piece orchestra, with costumes by the "Project Runway" season-twelve finalist Bradon McDonald. (Angel Orensanz Foundation, 172 Norfolk St. 914-407-0441. Nov. 6 and Nov. 10 at 7:30 and Nov. 8 at 6:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

With many of its members occupied in a new-music venture at the Met Museum, the balance of the orchestra stays behind at David Geffen Hall to play Mozart. Alan Gilbert leads his musicians in performances of the boy genius's lithe *Divertimento* for Strings in D Major, K. 136, and in the more symphonic and capacious *Serenade for Winds* ("Gran Partita") in B-Flat Major, K. 361, with the orchestra's puissant principal hornist, Philip Myers, making one of his occasional forays into the composer's horn concertos (No. 2 in E-Flat Major, K. 417) in between. (212-875-5656. Nov. 4-5 at 7:30 and Nov. 6-7 at 8.) • "Contact!," the orchestra's engaging new-music series, created

seven years ago by its maestro, Alan Gilbert, initiates its season with a concert at the Metropolitan Museum. It features the U.S. premiere of "Wave Movements," a co-composition by the rockers Richard Reed Parry and Bryce Dessner (from Arcade Fire and the National, respectively) made to both accompany and mimic the oceanic video "Seascapes" by Hiroshi Sugimoto (with the soprano Estelí Gomez), as well as the Chamber Symphony of the British composer Thomas Adès, whose classical mastery is of a different order entirely. André de Ridder conducts. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. metmuseum.org. Nov. 6-7 at 7.)

Bach Collegium Japan

Long the leading period-performance ensemble in Asia, Masaaki Suzuki's group comes to Zankel Hall to perform bedrock Baroque works by Bach (the *Brandenburg Concerto* No. 2 and the *Cantata* No. 51, "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!"), Vivaldi, and Handel. (212-247-7800. Nov. 6 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

Evgeny Kissin

The Russian virtuoso receives a privilege not given to a solo artist at Carnegie Hall since the days of

Vladimir Horowitz: two successive performances of the same recital, the better to satisfy public demand. His program offers sonatas by Mozart and Beethoven (the "Appassionata") along with piano pieces by Brahms (the *Three Intermezzos*, Op. 117) and Albéniz. (212-247-7800. Nov. 3 and Nov. 6 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Nov. 5 at 7:30: At the Kaplan Penthouse this week, the pianist Michael Brown and the clarinetist Jose Franch-Ballester, among others, take the stage to perform works by the late masters George Perle (including the *Wind Quintet* No. 4), Jonathan Harvey, and Edison Denisov, in addition to pieces by such contemporary talents as Paul Lansky, Andrew Norman ("Garden of Follies"), and Friedrich Cerha (the Austrian composer famous for completing the orchestration of Berg's "Lulu"). • Nov. 10 at 7:30: The Society (including such musicians as the pianist Anne-Marie McDermott) returns to Alice Tully Hall to present "Channel Crossing," a Franco-English program of music by Purcell, Britten, Ravel, Helen Grime (the U.S. premiere of "Aviary Sketches (After Joseph Cornell)"), and Fauré (the

Piano Quartet No. 1 in C Minor). (212-875-5788.)

Leila Josefowicz

John Novacek accompanies the incandescent young American violinist in a program that not only includes the kind of contemporary works for which she's best known—by Erkki-Sven Tüür and John Adams (the inevitable "Road Movies")—but also a look back to such classic repertoire as Falla's "Suite Populaire Espagnole" and Schumann's *Sonata* No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 105. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 10 at 7:30.)

New York Festival of Song: "From Russia to Riverside Drive"

In this special concert, NYFOS and the New York Philharmonic team up to present a program that includes not only treasured romances by Rachmaninoff but also a piquant selection of the music he heard during his New York years, by Gershwin, Ellington, and others. Dalit Warshaw, on theremin, joins the singers Dina Kuznetsova and Shea Owens as well as the series' directors, Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, on piano. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 10 at 8.)

MOVIES

NOW PLAYING

Bone Tomahawk

The writer and director S. Craig Zahler's debut feature is a well-crafted, leisurely paced, grisly drama that's both a Western and a horror film. The indomitable Kurt Russell stars as the sheriff of a small frontier town who sets out on a journey to rescue some townsfolk kidnapped by a group of cannibalistic cave dwellers. The sheriff is joined in his mission by three mismatched frontiersmen, played by Richard Jenkins, Patrick Wilson, and Matthew Fox (all excellent). Zahler has a relaxed way with the camera, eschewing quick cuts and handheld tomfoolery, and his script offers touches of character detail and dry humor that allow the actors to breathe new life into well-worn Old West tropes. Toward the end of the film, the story moves into offbeat territory with an inevitably grotesque and disturbing confrontation that lends a dark current to the genre's otherwise clear waters. —Bruce

Diones (In limited release and video on demand.)

Bridge of Spies

The new Steven Spielberg film starts in 1957, with the arrest of a Soviet spy named Rudolf Abel (Mark Rylance) in Brooklyn. The man assigned to defend him is James B. Donovan (Tom Hanks), a local insurance lawyer—trusted, experienced, and thought unlikely to cause a stir. Yet Donovan turns out to be a stubborn soul, who fights against the death penalty for his client and takes his argument all the way to the Supreme Court. Although such perseverance wins him few friends, endangers his family, and dismays his wife (Amy Ryan), it pays off when an American pilot is downed in Soviet airspace. Donovan is asked to travel to Berlin to get the pilot back, in exchange for Abel. As you would expect from Spielberg, the tale is securely told, with tautness and skill; what lifts it above some of his other historical dramas is

a touch of comic friction—courtesy of a smart script written by Joel and Ethan Coen, in league with Matt Charman. Hanks, as limber as ever, is required to square off against the restrained Rylance, who makes Abel a witty and formidable foe. Somehow, his kinship with Donovan offers a brief glow of warmth amid the snows of the Cold War. —Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 10/26/15.) (In wide release.)

Crimson Peak

Guillermo del Toro's churning mashup of Hitchcock and Henry James, Gothic horror and *giallo* gore-fests, is set around 1900. It starts in Buffalo, New York, where a cloistered young writer, Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska), is swept off her feet by Thomas Spence (Tom Hiddleston), a suave English nobleman who's there on business. Her father disapproves, but after his suspiciously sudden death Edith marries Thomas and follows him to his lonely and crumbling castle in Cumberland, England, where the couple lives with Thomas's domineering sister, Lucille (Jessica Chastain). Soon, the mysteries of the estate and the family's dark past turn Edith's idyll into a living nightmare; she suspects that her life is in danger. Del Toro builds a tight plot but never develops it; his frames are overdecorated with macabre clutter and smothered in shadow, but the atmosphere of dread never reaches ecstatic excesses. The director faces the material with a

studious earnestness, lavishing more attention on the effects than on the images or the performances. The movie only comes to life at the very end, with the inevitable suspense of the sanguinary showdown. —Richard Brody (In wide release.)

In Jackson Heights

Either residents of this Queens neighborhood really do spend most of their time in group meetings or the director Frederick Wiseman's new documentary pays exceptional attention to the occasions on which they do. In any case, Wiseman's very subject is the difference between neighborhood and community—between the happenstance of urban geography and the commitment of self-identification. His trenchant images meticulously parse discussions among residents of many backgrounds and speakers of many languages—for the most part, members of distinctive groups meeting among themselves. Living side by side, the communities of Jackson Heights appear to connect only by chance. Wiseman's emphasis is on gay residents, whose mutual support is energized by the memory of the murder there of Julio Rivera in 1990 by a gay-basher, and on Hispanic residents, including local merchants facing displacement due to gentrification and others who struggle against the threat of deportation. The heart of the film is an organized discussion on the experience of immigration; one

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OPENING BROOKLYN

An adaptation of the novel by Colm Tóibín, about an Irish immigrant in New York in the nineteen-fifties. Directed by John Crowley; starring Saoirse Ronan, Domhnall Gleeson, and Emory Cohen. Opening Nov. 4. (In limited release.)

IN JACKSON HEIGHTS
Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 4. (In limited release.)

MISS YOU ALREADY
Catherine Hardwicke directed this comic drama, about lifelong friends (Toni Collette and Drew Barrymore) who are confronting health issues. Co-starring Dominic Cooper. Opening Nov. 6. (In limited release.)

THE PEANUTS MOVIE
A 3-D animated comedy featuring Charles M. Schulz's characters. Directed by Steve Martino; with the voices of Noah Schnapps, Hadley Belle Miller, and Venus Schultheis. Opening Nov. 6. (In wide release.)

SPECTRE
The new adventures of James Bond, about the spy agency's efforts to resist its opponents within the British government while fighting a criminal gang. Directed by Sam Mendes; starring Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Monica Bellucci, Léa Seydoux, and Naomie Harris. Opening Nov. 6. (In wide release.)

SPOTLIGHT
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 6. (In limited release.)

THEEB
A drama, about a Bedouin boy attempting to survive in the desert during the First World War. Directed by Naji Abu Nowar. In Arabic. Opening Nov. 6. (In limited release.)

TRUMBO
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 6. (In limited release.)



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Tim Sutton's "Memphis," from 2013, in our digital edition and online.

woman's grandly intricate description of her daughter's harrowing journey through the desert to cross the border displays a passionate commitment to something larger than Jackson Heights—to American life itself.—R.B. (In limited release.)

The Martian

In Ridley Scott's science-fiction drama, Mark Watney (Matt Damon), an astronaut on a Martian mission, is abandoned, presumed dead, when the rest of his crew, menaced by a wild storm, has to skedaddle and head back home. Declining to despair, Watney, a botanist by trade, sets about growing food and sitting out his years of solitude. Scott's movie, boosted by a chipper performance from Damon, feels anything but cramped; it revels not just in the finicky joys of ingenuity, as "Apollo 13" did, but, against the odds, in a kind of comic expansiveness. There is fine support from Jeff Daniels, Chiwetel Ejiofor, and Kristen Wig, as some of the surprised and worried honchos back at NASA, and from Jessica Chastain, as the captain of the mission.—A.L. (10/12/15) (In wide release.)

Our Brand Is Crisis

Sandra Bullock's spirited performance, as Jane Bodine, an American political consultant recruited to help an out-of-touch patrician run for President of Bolivia, can't do much to rescue the heavy-handed satire and its blandly predictable sensibility. In this fictionalized adaptation of Rachel Boynton's 2005 documentary of the same title, Jane, who had been burned by some bad electoral defeats, overcomes her initial misgivings and flings herself into the race with febrile energy. She's endearingly overwhelmed by the thin atmosphere in the high altitude of La Paz and stymied by the language barrier, but her competitive spirit is sparked by the arrival of her onetime lover and longtime nemesis, Pat Candy (Billy Bob Thornton), in an opposing candidate's corner. The director, David Gordon Green, has little feel for the movie's comic turns, and his way with the drama is held back by his obvious and conventional sympathies. The political background on which the story runs is sketched thinly; curiosity about Bolivian life is shunted off to a few lines of dialogue and an abundance of folkloric costumes.—R.B. (In wide release.)

Pan

The auguries were not kind for this latest spin on the myth of Peter Pan, yet, somehow, thanks in large part to a zestful script by Jason Fuchs, Joe Wright's film gets by on inventiveness and zip. Its attitude toward history is a casual shrug, which marks a change from the slavishness of so much period drama. Peter (Levi Miller), an orphan boy, is spirited out of a London orphanage during the Second World War and flown by pirate ship

to Neverland. There he meets James Hook (Garrett Hedlund), who becomes a friend and comrade in arms. Their enmity lies far in the future, though the film is not short of villainy, for Hugh Jackman has a blast as Blackbeard. His delivery ranges from fortissimo to sotto voce, and his mournful rage for immortality—which is boosted by a magic mineral, mined by captive children—is a counterpart to the eternal youth that will, as we know, be sprinkled like fairy dust on Peter. The movie sags in the middle stretch, but no matter; there are mermaids, crocodiles, and crystal mountains still to come.—A.L. (10/19/15) (In wide release.)

Room

A boy named Jack (Jacob Tremblay) celebrates his fifth birthday. He and his mother, Joy (Brie Larson), make a cake, but they cannot go out to buy candles. Other things, too, seem awry. Jack has long hair, and he sometimes sleeps in a wardrobe, which he calls "wardrobe." Slowly, we piece together their story: Joy has been kidnapped off the street and imprisoned for years in a soundproof shed by a man they know only as Old Nick (Sean Bridgers). Jack is his child, by Joy, whom he rapes at regular intervals. The first half of Lenny Abrahamson's movie, adapted by Emma Donoghue from her own novel, is extremely painful to watch, and sullen with routine; the second half, in which the captives plan a break for freedom, displays more spirit, and it also provides a welcome role for Joan Allen, as Joy's mother. But there is something pat about the movie's main conceit; Tremblay is startling, but you sense that the film is using a horrific plight (reminiscent of several real-life cases) to offer up a meditative study of childhood, and of just how much a child's view of things—first blinkered, then opening wide—can teach us. Does that lesson not come at far too great a cost?—A.L. (In limited release.)

Steve Jobs

With an entire busy life to choose from, Danny Boyle's new film about Steve Jobs, scripted by Aaron Sorkin, cuts to the core of Apple. Of Jobs's life as an adopted child, and then as an unwashed hippie, we see nothing; nor do we receive a hint of his decline and death, from cancer, in 2011. A few cursory flashbacks point to his hard labor with Steve Wozniak (Seth Rogen) as they toil over their earliest products in a garage. What we get, mainly, is three launches: of the Macintosh, in 1984; of the NeXT cube, in 1988; and of the iMac, ten years later. Within those events, a pattern of exasperation is set. Jobs (Michael Fassbender) rants at his employees over technical details, argues vehemently with John Sculley (Jeff Daniels) about Apple commercials and board meetings, and finds himself confronted by his former

girlfriend (Katherine Waterston) about their daughter, Lisa. The result is a draining experience, as relentless and as caged-in as a wrestling match. Nonetheless, the movie meshes with the popular legend of Jobs as something more than a guru, the implication being that, if he made life hell for other people, it was worth it.—A.L. (10/19/15) (In wide release.)

Suffragette

This historical drama, set in London in 1912, is centered on Maud Watts (Carey Mulligan), a twenty-four-year-old laundress who seems never to have given a thought to her voting rights until she gets caught in a protest. Befriended by an activist colleague and motivated by rage at sexual abuse in the workplace, Maud becomes increasingly involved in the suffrage movement. After her arrest and imprisonment, her husband (Ben Whishaw) priors their child (Adam Michael Dodd) away from her, and Maud becomes ever more militant. The movie's sharp focus on the connection of women's subjugation at work and at home to their lack of a vote—on the injustice of laws that women can't vote to change—is unfortunately not matched by the drama. Maud—like her colleagues, her opponents, and even the movement's charismatic leader, Emmeline Pankhurst (Meryl Streep)—remains a cipher. The script, by Abi Morgan, filters out the contextual complexities of politics, and Sarah Gavron's direction reduces difficult situations to simple sentiments. With Helena Bonham Carter, as a principled pharmacist, and Brendan Gleeson, as a wily police inspector.—R.B. (In limited release.)

Truth

If statuettes for earnestness were doled out at the Academy Awards, James Vanderbilt's film would go home with an armful. It describes a series of unfortunate events at CBS in 2004, when an investigation into George W. Bush's service in the Texas Air National Guard ran into trouble. After the report aired on "60 Minutes," doubts were cast upon the source material; scandal ensued, resulting in the departure not only of the producer, Mary Mapes (Cate Blanchett), and several of her colleagues, but also of Dan Rather (Robert Redford), the anchorman who presented the story. The ferocity levelled against them was, as the movie proposes, politically inspired, and the stakes, in an election year, were incontestably high. Nonetheless, whether the film has earned its tragic tone—complete with mournful patches of slow motion and tearful diversions into Mapes's family history—is open to debate, and viewers with a mean streak may struggle not to smirk. As for the original question (did the young Bush get an easy ride?), it's all but lost in the fray.—A.L. (10/26/15) (In limited release.)

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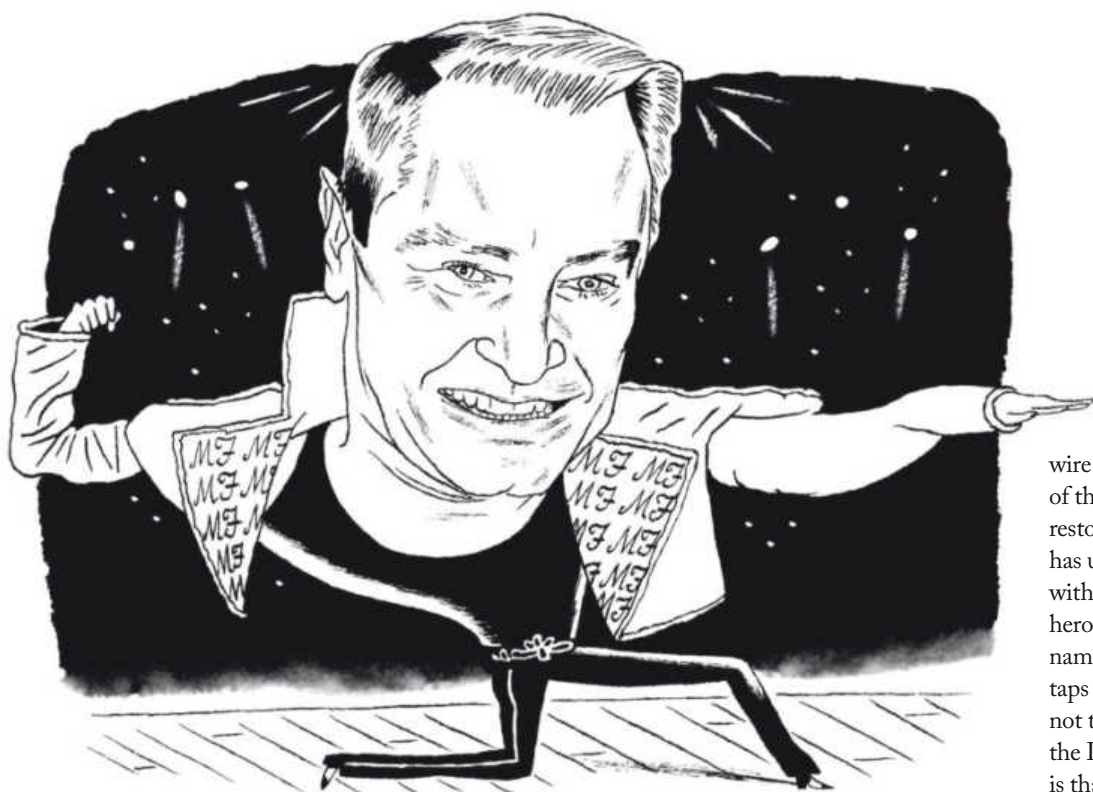
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DANCE



"Lord of the Dance: Dangerous Games" plays an eight-week engagement at the Lyric.

FLATLEY STEPS DOWN

A new show on Broadway marks the end of a career.

MICHAEL FLATLEY IS RETIRING! This is terrible news. But you can see why he'd want to go home. He started Irish step dancing when he was eleven, as he was growing up on Chicago's South Side, and this is a discipline that takes a lot out of you, especially the way he came to practice it. (His Web site says that he once produced thirty-five taps per second. How is that possible?) He's now fifty-seven, and he doesn't need money. Reportedly, his shows—"Riverdance," which debuted in 1994, as an intermission act at the Eurovision Song Contest, and then "Lord of the Dance," "Feet of Flames," and "Celtic Tiger"—made him at one point the highest-paid dancer in the world, earning 1.6 million dollars a week. Now he'd like to go on cashing the checks and let someone else do the dancing. If you want to see him one more time, get a ticket to "Lord of the Dance: Dangerous Games," his most recent production, which just had a triumph in London and will open in New York, at the Lyric, on Nov. 10, for an eight-week run.

If Flatley is one of the fastest dancers in the world, it's possible that he's the one with the least taste. There is a certain kind of theatrical spectacle at loose today—think Cirque du Soleil or the Olympics opening ceremonies—that unites such things as videos of white stallions, great belches of flame, and what look to be projections of H-bomb tests with squads of women who appear to hail from cosmetics ads. To judge from the song lyrics, all the people involved have a "dream," and it eventually comes true, for optimism is as central as hyperbole to this genre. "Dangerous Games" is one of the most egregious examples I have ever seen. Amid the videos and the dry-ice miasma, a pack of bad guys wearing helmets that seem to be wound with razor

wire steal our hero's "Lord of the Dance" belt, and it is restored to him only after he has undergone a series of trials without his undershirt on. The hero is a handsome young man named James Keegan, and he taps extremely well, but this is not the person we know of as the Lord of the Dance. Where is that guy?

Finally he arrives, at the top of a staircase, in one of his signature jewelled jackets. Relaxed and happy, his upper body swinging contentedly over the machine gun that is his lower body, he takes over the show's finale. In and out of the ensemble he tools, doing fabulous tricks. Surprise! Suddenly there are three of him (holograms), and they do a challenge dance. Surprise again! The outer two dissolve into the middle one. Then that one vanishes, too, only to be replaced by the real Flatley. On and on he goes. He hugs the bad guy—he forgives him. He kisses the girls. We wish it would go on forever. But finally he points to the Lord of the Dance belt, now encircling the waist of James Keegan. He is telling us that he has passed the torch. Fat chance.

—Joan Acocella

Garth Fagan Dance

For his company's forty-fifth-anniversary performances at the Joyce, Fagan honors a friend: the larger-than-life dancer, actor, choreographer, and painter Geoffrey Holder, who died last year. Fagan and Holder were both born in the Caribbean, and Fagan's choreographic tribute is like a dance party in the islands; a love duet at the center encapsulates Holder's long marriage to Carmen de Lavallade. Amid several programs of repertory, there's also "So You See," a première by the veteran company member Norwood Penne- well, who's turning out to be a fine choreographer in the Fagan line. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 3-8.)

"Hagomoro"

Many artists pay lip service to collaboration, but this opera/theatre/dance work, a reinterpretation of an early Noh play, is the real deal. The score, by Nathan Davis, is performed by the ICE ensemble and the avant-garde flutist Claire Chase as well as a tenor, a mezzo soprano, and a girls' choir. Wendy Whelan and her longtime New York City Ballet partner Jock Soto will perform choreography by David Neumann. The director of this ambitious work is the visual artist David Michalek, who is also Whelan's husband. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 3 and Nov. 5-8.)

Ralph Lemon

Once a brainy, boundary-testing choreographer, Lemon long ago became an unclassifiable artist. He describes "Scaffold Room" as a "lecture-performance-musical," in which the extraordinary Okwui Okpokwasili and April Matthis violently inhabit a series of black female personae, inundating the room with language and ideas. A concurrent installation features drawings and sculpture by Lemon, and other events include artist talks and recitations of subversive material: for example, Yvonne Rainer reading from Sade's "120 Days of Sodom." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Nov. 3-7 and Nov. 9-10.)

BalletCollective

There are three constants to Schumacher's creations for BalletCollective, a chamber ensemble made up of colleagues from his home company, New York City Ballet. The first is the quality of the dancers, who include Taylor Stanley, Ashley Laracey, and the fascinatingly intense Claire Kretzschmar. The second is Schumacher's commitment to commissioning music from young composers influenced by rock, folk, jazz, and, yes, classical music. The third is the way he draws upon visual art as a source of movement ideas. In this case, it's the photographs of Paul Maffi and Dafy Hagai. The evening will include four works, two new and two from last year. (N.Y.U. Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-998-4941. Nov. 4-5.)

Circa

In "Opus," the Debussy String Quartet plays Shostakovich, sometimes while blindfolded but always in the midst of fourteen acrobats flying about and balancing in human pyramids. Those are members of Circa, an Australian troupe that can express complex emotion through circus techniques without stinting on the gasp-inducing stunts. Here the sense of risk is haunted, as the music is, by the darkness of life under totalitarian regimes. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 4-8.)

Neil Greenberg / Yvonne Meier / Jennifer Monson

Three major figures in experimental dance share an evening. Greenberg presents solo studies that have fed or will feed into his group works. Monson returns to strategies she used in the nineteen-eighties. Meier dances in noisy costumes. And the three combine forces in a brief trio designed for the occasion. (JACK, 505½ Waverly Ave., Brooklyn. jackny.org. Nov. 5-7.)

Olga Pericet / "Flamenco sin Título"

In addition to being an exceptional dancer—sleek, mercurial, seductive—Pericet is one of a handful of flamenco choreographers seeking to move the form in a more intimate, personal direction. Her "Flamenco sin Título" is a tightly choreographed solo evening in which she is in constant conversation with three (excellent) musicians. Her approach is varied, and she's not afraid to delve into the more decorative sides of flamenco and the once-popular *escuela bolera*: she dances with castanets, a giant *mantón* (or fringed shawl), and wears one of the most beautiful *batas de cola* you'll see on a flamenco stage. (Repertorio Español, 138 E. 27th St. 212-225-9999. Nov. 5-10. Through Nov. 22.)

Volmir Cordeiro

Cordeiro was born and raised in Brazil, but his work is more strongly marked by his graduate study in France. In his solo "Inès," presented here as part of "Performa 15," he seeks to inhabit a woman he once met, a fifty-seven-year-old mother with a plan to win fame through reality television. Wrapped in

motley fabrics, he dances her happiness, sadness, ambition, and shame, hoping to illuminate the cult of celebrity and the woman's marginal social status. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Nov. 6-7.)

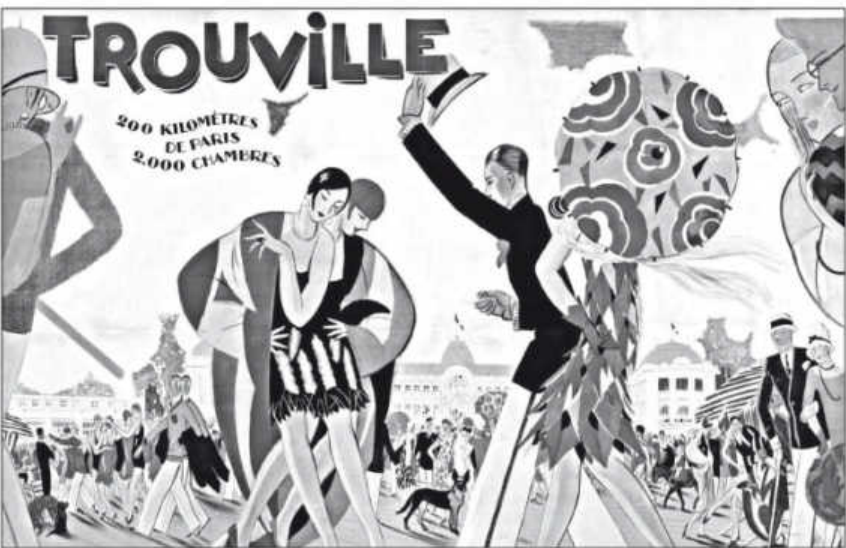
Jérôme Bel

The anti-virtuosic performances conceived by this wily French Conceptualist are often funny and can lower an audience's defenses before striking. For "Performa 15," he stages "Ballet (New York)," in which twelve New Yorkers, trained and untrained, undertake dancelike tasks. Over three weeks, the thirty-five-minute work will be performed—presumably with different resonances—in three different venues: the white cube of the Marian Goodman gallery, the hallowed dance studio where Merce Cunningham long worked (55 Bethune St., Nov. 14-15), and the conventional theatre of El Museo del Barrio (1230 Fifth Ave., Nov. 19). (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Nov. 6-7. Through Nov. 19.)

"Works & Process" / "Intensio"

The intimate series offers an introduction to Daniil Simkin's "Intensio," a chamber-ballet project dedicated to new work. (It will appear at the Joyce in January.) Simkin is a principal dancer at American Ballet Theatre, known for his impish humor and razor-sharp technique, with a taste for technology. A discussion and performance of excerpts includes the choreographers Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and Gregory Dolbashian and the dancers Calvin Royal III and Cassandra Trenary. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3575. Nov. 8.)

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MUSEUMS SHORT LIST MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Walid Raad." Through Jan. 31.

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

"Frank Stella: A Retrospective." Through Feb. 7.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Zanele Muholi: Isibonelo/Evidence." Through Nov. 8.

BRONX MUSEUM

"Martin Wong: Human Instamatic." Opens Nov. 4.

FRICK COLLECTION

"Andrea del Sarto: The Renaissance Workshop in Action." Through Jan. 10.

JEWISH MUSEUM

"Unorthodox." Opens Nov. 6.

NEW MUSEUM

"Jim Shaw: The End Is Here." Through Jan. 10.

GALLERIES SHORT LIST UPTOWN

Troy Brauntuch

Petzel
35 E. 67th St. 212-680-9467.
Opens Nov. 4.

Thornton Dial

Boesky
118 E. 64th St. 212-680-9889.
Opens Nov. 5.

Peter Doig

Werner
4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623.
Opens Nov. 6.

CHELSEA

Carroll Dunham
Gladstone
515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.
Through Dec. 4.

Mary Heilmann

303 Gallery
507 W. 24th St. 212-255-1121.
Opens Nov. 5.

Brice Marden

Marks
522 and 526 W. 22nd St.
212-243-0200.
Opens Nov. 7.

Giorgio Morandi

Zwirner
537 W. 20th St. 212-517-8677.
Opens Nov. 7.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Museum of Modern Art

"Picasso Sculpture"

You may come away from this magnificent show of nearly a hundred and fifty objects, which date from 1902 to 1964, convinced that Picasso was more naturally a sculptor than a painter, though all his training and early experience, and by far most of his prodigious energy, went into painting. The definitive artist of the twentieth century was an amateur—nearly a hobbyist—in sculpture, so the medium reveals the core predilections of his genius starkly, without the dizzying subtleties of his painting but true to its essence. Most of his pictures conjure space that is cunningly fitted to the images that inhabit it. When the space becomes real, the dynamic jolts. The herky-jerky intermittence of the artist's involvement with sculpture might seem an obstacle to a reconsideration of his achievement, but it proves to be a boon. Each generation looks at Picasso in its own way. This show gives us a Picasso for an age of cascading uncertainties. The story it tells is messier than the period-by-period, not to mention mistress-by-mistress, narratives of the past. Instead, each piece finds the artist in a moment of decision, adventuring beyond his absolute command of pictorial aesthetics into physical and social space, where everything is in flux and in question. Through Feb. 7.

MOMA PS1

"Greater New York"

This transgenerational group exhibition is a deeply thoughtful if muted affair, with one selfie-baiting exception: an installation of twenty-four figurative sculptures on the second floor. They range from John Ahearn's loving, life-size rendition, in painted cast fibreglass, of a South Bronx mother and daughter, made in 1987, to a statue encrusted in beads—a giddy hybrid of Umberto Boccioni and Bootsie Collins—completed last year by the Mexican-born, Brooklyn-based Raúl de Nieves. Standing sentinel is "Kali Bobbit," a slapstick warrior-goddess in the form of a mannequin wearing thigh-high stockings and a belt full of knives, made in 1994 by the feminist pioneer Mary Beth Edelson. Elsewhere, L.G.B.T. issues are prominent, seen through scrim of both nostalgia (Alvin Baltrop's candid photographs of gay men cruising on the West Side piers in the post-Stonewall seventies) and rage (the AIDS activism of the collective Fierce Pussy). Charles Atlas trains his video camera on the drag legend the Lady Bunny as she champions the disenfranchised in an impassioned rant that could give Bernie Sanders a run for his money. Through March 7.

Guggenheim Museum

"Alberto Burri:

The Trauma of Painting"

Burri turned to art after serving as a physician for the Italian Army in the Second World War and being

interned in a P.O.W. camp in Texas. After early experiments with tar-shellacked canvases, he began combining untreated fabrics with upholstery, which he stretched like paintings and irregularly sutured into works more fraught than modernist collage, but with none of the showmanship of the New York School or Parisian *informe*. The curator Emily Braun mounts an all-out defense of Burri's centrality to the art of the last century, finding anticipations of both Arte Povera and process art in his modifications of humble materials, and drawing connections between the patched, unpainted burlap of his fifties-era "Sacchi" (or sacks) to Italian neorealist cinema of the same era. (Robert Rauschenberg, who would soon alight upon his iconic "combines," saw several of these works when he visited Burri's studio in 1953.) Many of the pieces in the exhibition have never been exhibited outside of Italy, and if his bulging "Gobbi" (hunchbacks) or his fissured "Cretti" (cracks) look a bit dated, so what? There are greater virtues in art than perpetual newness. Through Jan. 6.

Museum of the City of New York

"Jacob Riis: Revealing New York's Other Half"

No one paid much attention to the squalor and hardship of tenement life in New York City until Riis, a Danish immigrant turned journalist, published his photographs of children sleeping in alleys and families huddled in dark, airless rooms in his 1890 book, "How the Other Half Lives," which became a national sensation. Modern copies of the fragile originals are on view here, overshadowed by a wealth of related letters, etchings, maps, newspaper articles, and Riis's subsequent books. Despite the turn-of-the-century outfits, there's nothing quaint about Riis's pictures of flophouses, opium dens, sweatshops, and low-life saloons, seen most vividly here in a slide show accompanied by a soundtrack of an actor reading a lecture by the photographer at his most evangelical, declaring, "A whole city of people is going straight to perdition!" Through March 20.

SculptureCenter

"Anthea Hamilton: Lichen! Libido! Chastity!"

One of the most bizarre art works in New York this season is Hamilton's eighteen-foot-tall sculpture of a man's buttocks, made of painted foam, epoxy, and vinyl, which appears to be bursting through a brick wall. It's the British sculptor's interpretation of an unrealized proposal by the Italian architect Gaetano Pesce for a Manhattan office building, and it's not the only work in her American museum debut that finds something fetishistic in the built environment. The courtyard is equipped with PVC pipes embellished to suggest giant cig-

arettes. Three chastity belts—two made of laser-cut stainless steel, one made of rubber—are suspended from chain links in the center of the gallery like an NC-17 swing set. Through Jan. 4.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Jeff Wall

Two surveyors at work in the desert, a woman trying on clothes in a dressing room, a man standing in the dimly lit hall of an office. None of the documentary-style images in the Canadian photographer's new show suggest the days of meticulous staging and postproduction it takes to create them. Wall's laborious process and the critique that his pictures are designed to convey (the surveyors' scene is about nature being developed as property) give his work real intellectual heft, but they can also weigh it down. The most obviously set-up photograph here—of a dazed-looking man on the ground surrounded by other men—is also the most compelling and enigmatic. Through Dec. 19. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Zanele Muholi

Muholi's incisive, soulful portraits of women in South Africa's L.G.B.T. community have established the Johannesburg-based photographer on the international scene as both an artist and an activist. (An exhibition of those portraits closes this week at the Brooklyn Museum.) Here, she turns the camera on herself and remains fierce while adding a dash of antic wit. The black-and-white self-portraits, made over the past two years, have affinities with Cindy Sherman's film stills and make smart use of props: a showgirl-worthy black-feather headdress, a crown of wooden clothespins, an unruly sheepskin that could be mistaken for dreadlocks. The mood shifts between playful and sombre, often within the same image. Through Dec. 5. (Richardson, 525 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

"Nuevos Colores"

Given the recent rapprochement between the U.S. and Cuba, we can expect more exhibitions from the country that has produced such great artists as Wifredo Lam, Ana Mendieta, and Tania Bruguera. Unfortunately, none of the fifteen Cuban artists in this endeavor approach the talent of those pioneers. Carlos Quintana exhibits a sloppy painting of a flamboyantly designed hardcover titled "The Book of Everything," a collaged image of ethernet cables by Abel Barroso bears the flat-footed caption "connecting," and Arlés del Río contributes a ponderous installation of snorkels. Esterio Segura injects a rare note of levity in a drawing that makes ribald visual puns on an airplane cockpit. Through Nov. 14. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)



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THE THEATRE

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FOOL FOR LOVE
Samuel J. Friedman

FUN HOME
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THE GIN GAME
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Pershing Square Signature
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KILL FLOOR
Claire Tow

KING CHARLES III
Music Box

LOST GIRLS
Lucille Lortel

MISERY
Broadhurst

OLD TIMES
American Airlines Theatre

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The Duke on 42nd Street.
Through Nov. 6.

THE QUARE LAND
DR2

RIPCORD
City Center Stage I

ROTHSCHILD & SONS
York Theatre at St. Peter's.
Through Nov. 8.

SONGBIRD
59E59

SPRING AWAKENING
Brooks Atkinson

UGLY LIES THE BONE
Roundabout Underground

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE
Lyceum

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Allegiance

Lea Salonga and George Takei star in a musical inspired by Takei's childhood experiences in Japanese-American internment camps, written by Marc Acito, Jay Kuo, and Lorenzo Thione. Stafford Arima directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 8. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Color Purple

Jennifer Hudson, Cynthia Erivo, and Danielle Brooks star in a revival of the 2005 musical, based on Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and directed by John Doyle. Previews begin Nov. 10. (Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Dada Woof Papa Hot

Scott Ellis directs a play by Peter Parnell ("QED"), in which two gay couples with kids navigate the pitfalls of urban parenting. In previews. Opens Nov. 9. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

Henry IV

St. Ann's Warehouse opens its new home with Phyllida Lloyd's production, which originated at the Donmar Warehouse and features an all-female cast. Previews begin Nov. 6. (45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

Hir

In a new comedy by the performance artist Taylor Mac, a young man returns home from the military to his transgender brother and his mother (Kristine Nielsen), who has decided to take down the patriarchy. In previews. Opens Nov. 8. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Important Hats of the Twentieth Century

Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new comedy by Nick Jones, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel, about a rivalry between two fashion designers in nineteen-thirties New York City. Previews begin Nov. 10. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

Invisible Thread

Diane Paulus directs Matt Gould and Griffin Matthews's musical, in which a young New Yorker volunteers in Uganda. In previews. (Second Stage, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom

Joel Schumacher directs Jennifer Haley's play, in which a suburban community must deal with a growing addiction to an online game that pits teen-agers against zombies. Previews begin Nov. 9. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

Night Is a Room

In Naomi Wallace's play, directed by Bill Rauch, the lives of a married couple are shattered on the man's fortieth birthday. In previews. (Pershing

Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

On Your Feet!

Jerry Mitchell directs a new biographical musical about the lives and careers of Gloria and Emilio Estefan, with choreography by Sergio Trujillo. In previews. Opens Nov. 5. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

Pike St.

The writer-performer Nilaja Sun ("No Child . . .") stages a new solo piece, in which she portrays Lower East Side residents preparing for a big storm. Previews begin Nov. 10. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101.)

School of Rock

Alex Brightman plays a rocker who poses as a substitute teacher, in this new musical based on the 2003 movie, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics by Glenn Slater, and a book by Julian Fellowes. Previews begin Nov. 9. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

Steve

The New Group presents Mark Gerrard's play, directed by Cynthia Nixon, about a former Broadway chorus boy entering middle age. With Mario Cantone, Matt McGrath, and Malcolm Gets. In previews. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

The Humans

The writer Annie Baker's influence is so pervasive among young playwrights that it's difficult to distinguish between her vision and that of Stephen Karam, who wrote this ninety-minute work, directed by Joe Mantello for the Roundabout. Set in a dark duplex apartment in Chinatown, the piece feels self-consciously "tragic" from the first. Hovering over a holiday family get-together is a secret that alters the already strained dynamic between a father, Erik Blake (the brilliant Reed Birney), and his two daughters, both of whom have their own problems. Small issues erupt during the course of this mournful gathering, as Erik's wife, Deirdre (Jayne Houdyshell, in a tour-de-force performance), tries to avoid what she cannot say while looking after her mother, Fiona (the incredible Lauren Klein). Despite the play's fairly standard realism, it's hard to figure out what's driving it beyond Karam's interest in style. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

Romance Language

In Joe Godfrey's anodyne, amorous drama, Kay (Audrey Heffeman Meyer), an Upper East Side widow, engages Fiore (Jared Zirilli), a gorgeous Italian some twenty years her junior, for a series of private language lessons. He teaches her proper pronunciation and

common idioms. She receives his instruction enthusiastically. After several weeks and an extracurricular trip to "La Bohème," they are speaking the language of love, which upsets Kay's straitlaced daughter, Penny (Mairin Lee), a corporate lawyer with an Electra complex. Is Fiore motivated by something other than passion? Will Penny accept their relationship? Will Kay ever say "*buon giorno*" correctly? The set is efficiently elegant, the acting heartfelt, and Carl Andress's direction practiced. But the plotting is predictable, and the dialogue too plummy for realism, too prim (aside from one enjoyably vulgar joke about the benefits of a Mediterranean diet) for tragedy or farce. (Theatre 511 at Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 866-811-4111. Through Nov. 8.)

Sylvia

A. R. Gurney's 1995 comedy, directed by Daniel Sullivan, is as uncomplicated and eager for love as its title character, a stray canine (Annaleigh Ashford) who is adopted by Greg, a New York fuddy-duddy (Matthew Broderick, naturally). Played with anthropomorphic friskiness by Ashford, whose charisma is off the charts, Sylvia gives Greg the kind of life-loving joy he can't seem to find with his wife, Kate (Julie White), who wants the dog out of the house. Never mind the creepy paternalistic vibe running throughout—Sylvia resembles nothing so much as a spunky young mistress on a leash—and you've got two acts of mild-mannered humor, some of which hasn't aged so well. (Robert Sella plays, among other roles, a therapist with mutable gender identity.) Amiable and overlong, Gurney's modern chestnut is funniest when it goes crude, as when Sylvia curses out a cat in the park. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

Thérèse Raquin

The most interesting feature of this show, otherwise dead at the core, is Beowulf Boritt's sets, lit with visual alacrity by Keith Parham. Unfortunately, the performers reduce the design team's work to mere dressing once they take the stage, especially Keira Knightley, who appears to have no inner life to call on in her depiction of a nineteenth-century French woman limited by the times, and by love. More or less forced to marry her cousin, Camille (Gabriel Ebert), she falls in love with her friend Laurent (Matt Ryan), a swarthy painter who, along with Thérèse, plots to murder the boorish Camille so they can be together. But the young lovers find no rest in each other's arms—guilt drives them mad. As Madame Raquin, the doomed household's matriarch, Judith Light is all "Dark Shadows" gothic foreboding, but she doesn't stand a chance next to Knightley, who seems stupefied by the stage's demands. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)



NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

Brooklyn Electronic Music Festival

This September, the *Daily News* reported that Coachella producers were eyeing Flushing Meadows Park, in Queens, as a potential location for a New York City music festival. It would be a sight to behold. The city hasn't yet produced the sprawling lawn and food-truck caravans that are a part of festivals in more spacious locales: in their place typically are clusters of shows hosted in small to mid-sized venues across the boroughs, connected primarily by a wrist band or a badge. It's not exactly camping-friendly, but this may be the perfect arrangement for the Brooklyn Electronic Music Festival, an affair that aims to celebrate the jockey as much as the disk. Despite the sunrise sessions of Ibiza's sprawling mega-raves, electronic music is most fun in labyrinthine clubs like Verboten, Good Room, and Output, where marquee d.j.s like Armand Van Helden and Masters at Work will cross paths with fresher acts such as Laidback Luke and Snakehips. (Various locations. brooklynemf.com. Nov. 5-8.)

Café Tacuba

This quartet formed in a garage in a Mexico City suburb in the nineteen-eighties, under the influence of the Clash, the Violent Femmes, and the Smiths. But the group also wanted to represent the sounds of its native country, paralleling the inward-looking internationalism of late-sixties Tropicalismo, which fused Anglo rock with Brazilian musical forms and an experimental sensibility. In Café Tacuba's case, rock and pop intermingle with (and sometimes inform) norteño ballads, romantic boleros, and sunny, upbeat tunes in the *son jarocho* style of Veracruz. The band's long career has produced several landmark albums, including "Re," from 1994, a sprawling collection that showed off its diverse interests. More recent releases, like 2012's electronica-tinged "El Objeto Antes Llamado Disco," further demonstrate its undiminished musical curiosity. (Apollo, 253 W. 125th St. 212-531-5300. Nov. 7.)

DIIV

The front man Zachary Cole Smith, a native New Yorker, founded DIIV in 2011. He has persevered through a full suite of rock-star trappings: a very public relationship with the singer Sky Ferreira, a lineup of bandmates that changes with each new in-fight, and, perhaps most notably, a documented battle with substance abuse, culminating in a 2013 arrest for heroin possession. The band's 2012 debut, "Oshin," released on the Brooklyn

label Captured Tracks, put excellent guitar work first and lyrical transparency second, the result of years dedicated to gigging around the city, most famously at Brooklyn's now-defunct punk landmark 285 Kent. This year, the band will release its anticipated sophomore effort, "Is the Is Are," and the lead single, "Dopamine," feels reconciliatory and optimistic. Webster Hall lacks the jagged, D.I.Y. décor of 285, but as the outfit looks forward, a change of scenery couldn't really hurt. (125 E. 11th St. 212-353-1600. Nov. 8.)

Mean Jeans

The members of this cult punk trio from Portland share equal passions for pizza, marijuana, and outer space. Who doesn't? Working in a genre where self-seriousness is rewarded to the point of absurdity, Mean Jeans has more fun than everyone else by indulging punk's goofier side, more Monty Python than Minor Threat. Last spring, the local Portland label Dirtnap released "Singles," a collection of the band's greatest hits and under-heralded gems, and the beach-primed hooks, assigned sophomore titles like "Stoned 2 the Bone," "Tears in My Beers," and "RU Mental," play like Joey Ramone starring in a John Landis high-school comedy. The band's slapstick music videos bring you even closer to the chaos, but catch them live at Ludlow's cozy venue for a true riot. (Cake Shop, 152 Ludlow St. 212-253-0036. Nov. 7.)

Elliot Moss

Take quick stock of this bedroom producer's mop of hair and black-rimmed specs and you'd be forgiven for expecting him to cast a spell before cutting a track. But the voice Moss summons throughout his "Highspeeds" album, quietly released last spring, is far from the realm of fantasy, grounded in cold, lived-in melancholy. It's an easy listen for fans of Bon Iver and James Blake: round, drifting, indebted to R. & B. while delivered over coiled, muted electronic dance scores. Some tracks find a path to euphoria: "Best Light" stumbles into double-time trance at its second half, an effect that should pay off tenfold in this dim, square back room. (Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. 212-260-4700. Nov. 5.)

Patti Smith

Punk and art have never been more closely aligned than they are within the skinny frame of Patti Smith. She solidified her literary bona fides with the publication of "Just Kids," which won a National Book Award in 2010, and has recently followed it up with "M Train." But Smith has always been a rocker. Her 1975 debut, "Horses," with the iconic black-and-white cover photo by Robert Mapplethorpe, was an attention-grabbing celebration of the word, the beat, the attitude. Smith and her band (including two original members, the guitarist **Lenny Kaye** and the drummer **Jay Dee Daugherty**) will perform the record in its entirety, marking the fortieth anniversary of its release. (Beacon Theatre, 2124 Broadway. 212-465-6500. Nov. 10.)

Mavis Staples and Joan Osborne

The seventy-six-year-old gospel and soul growler Staples is enjoying her greatest success since those heady days of the sixties and seventies, when she was the lead voice of the Staple Singers, providing a potent mix of activism and spirituality and scoring big hits with "Respect Yourself" and "I'll Take You There." Her last two solo albums were produced by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, a fellow-Chicagoan. Staples is joined on this "Solid Soul" tour by Joan Osborne, who's proved herself an

exciting exponent of the blues, Motown, and the Philly sound. They'll perform separate sets, then get together for the finale. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 4.)

Wolf Eyes

New York night life continues to drift farther from the Manhattan skyline. Two years ago, this offbeat all-ages venue opened in a crumbling storage property deep in Ridgewood, Queens, in the former home of the Silent Barn. Since then, it's become a central incubator for local and national avant-garde acts, and this week, Michigan's hard-working ambassadors of harsh noise hold court, performing songs from their new album, "I Am a Problem: Mind in Pieces," released last week on Jack White's label, Third Man. Wolf Eyes' discography is intimidating (Third Man pegs their output at more than five hundred lathe cuts, CD-Rs, and cassettes), but this album feels like a turning point, finding the trio gradually migrating their pounding post-industrial sound into poppier pastures. Earplugs are still recommended. (Trans Pecos, 915 Wyckoff Ave. Nov. 7.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Stanley Clarke

Although Jaco Pastorius deservedly gets the glory for revolutionizing the electric bass in the late seventies, Stanley Clarke had already been turning heads since the start of the decade with his extraordinary playing on both the acoustic and amplified versions of the instrument. For the first half of a two-week engagement, the super-bassist leads his own band, manned by younger players thoroughly versed in Clarke's fusion visions. (Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St. 212-475-8592. Nov. 3-8.)

Russell Malone

Ask for sleek guitar work that laces a ballad with silken tones and Russell Malone can provide all you care to hear. But with a tight rhythm section behind him, as he has at this special birthday engagement, this adroit neo-bop stylist is apt to turn on the heat. His quartet includes **Rick Germanson** on piano and **Willie Jones III** on drums. (Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Nov. 6-8.)

John Pizzarelli and Jessica Molaskey

There are good reasons why the guitarist and singer Pizzarelli and his vocaliste wife, Molaskey, rule the cabaret world. Superb musicality doesn't hurt, but neither does natural charm or unforced enthusiasm. Supported by a crack trio, the enchanting duo will perform seventies classics from their upcoming album, "My Generation," as well as material from Pizzarelli's "Midnight McCartney" project, which puts a breezy jazz spin on Sir Paul's work. (Café Carlyle, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Nov. 3-7 and Nov. 10. Through Nov. 28.)

Threadgill, Iyer, & Prieto

Henry Threadgill, the rigorously adventurous instrumentalist, composer, and bandleader, is obsessed with tonal texture and ensemble balance. Joining the veteran saxophonist and flautist in this ad-hoc chamber trio will be the pianist **Vijay Iyer** and the drummer **Dafnis Prieto**, both shining lights on the new-jazz scene as well as MacArthur Fellows. (Jazz Gallery, 1160 Broadway, at 27th St., 5th fl. 646-494-3625. Nov. 6-7.)

John Zorn

What once seemed like a daring aberration has become a welcome tradition: the downtown music

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Matthew Dibble and Rita Chikamoto. Photo by Riven Alenador

avatar John Zorn stocks a week at this hallowed jazz club with various ensembles designed to exhibit his myriad sonic interests. The engagement begins with two nights of **Electric Masada**, followed by the **Dreamers**, two bands with similar personnel that will draw from different aspects

of Zorn's inexhaustible repertoire. The trumpeter **Wadada Leo Smith**, the drummer **Tyshawn Sorey**, and the keyboardist **John Medeski** will join the visionary composer and saxophonist later in the week. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Nov. 3-8.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

Diwali on the Hudson

In the early aughts, a snaking loop of syncopated hand claps and kick drums swept into mainstream radio through a back door of Jamaican dancehall. Tropic hits like Sean Paul's "Get Busy" and Rihanna's "Pon di Replay" were anchored by a drum sample affectionately referred to as the "Diwali riddim," for its Indian dance-music influence. Diwali, the ancient Hindu autumn holiday, is the largest festival in South Asia, celebrated worldwide in places like Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, New Zealand, and, now for the second year, New York City's waterfront. DJ Rekha crafted pulsing world beats back when pop first got a taste for Diwali; she will provide the soundtrack for an evening of food, drinks, performance, and fireworks on Chelsea Piers, with proceeds going to the Desai Foundation. (Sunset Terrace, Chelsea Pier 61. 212-336-6777. Nov. 4.)

Reverend Billy & the Stop Shopping Choir

These performance artists rally against consumerism the way 6-train missionaries warn of the impending last days and the judgment to come. The front man Billy Talen's style of absurdist activism incorporates musical numbers and evangelical preaching, and has brought him from street performances in Times Square to slots opening for Neil Young and this two-month residency at Joe's Pub, where he and his flock will premiere ten new songs. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Nov. 1 at 2. Sundays through Dec. 20.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Over the next two weeks, the auction houses will tussle for domination of the insanely high-priced markets for Impressionist, postwar, and contemporary art. The showdown begins at **Sotheby's** (Nov. 4-5) with two sales of prized items from the collection of the late shopping-mall tycoon—and former Sotheby's owner—A. Alfred Taubman, who was disgraced by the Sotheby's-Christie's price-fixing scandal of some fifteen years ago. The wide range of works includes a view of the Gesuati church in Venice by Sargent, a bold de Kooning from the seventies ("Untitled XXI"), and a late work by Modigliani (a portrait of his dealer's housekeeper, Paulette Jourdain). Then it's on to two days of Impressionist pieces (Nov. 5-6), with the more valuable lots leading the way at the evening sale (Nov. 5). In addition to a gorgeous, pea-green-colored Arles landscape by Van Gogh ("Paysage Sous un Ciel Mouvementé"), the evening sale offers a rare Russian Suprematist canvas, "Mystic Suprematism (Black Cross on Red Oval)," by Malevich. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • As it did last season, **Christie's** will cram its sales into a single hectic week and proceed in reverse chronological order, leading with twentieth- and twenty-first century art and then moving back in time to the Impressionists. Its first sale, entitled "The Artist's Muse" (Nov. 9) consists of a select group of twentieth-century works; the pièces de résistance are a sensual nude ("Nu

Couché") painted by Modigliani at the height of the First World War and one of Roy Lichtenstein's comic-book nurse paintings. A somewhat larger sale of high-priced postwar and contemporary art (Nov. 10) includes works by Bourgeois, Fontana, Twombly, and Warhol. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • **Phillips**, which specializes in all things contemporary, holds two auctions devoted to twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, on Nov. 8 (featuring the highest-priced lots) and Nov. 10. The enticements include a delicately wrought mobile by Calder, a "Film Still" by Cindy Sherman, and a ball of crushed metal by John Chamberlain entitled "Bullwinkle." (450 Park Ave. 212-940-1200.)

READINGS AND TALKS

Rizzoli Bookstore

Two authors examine the French home from contrasting vantage points: Florence de Dampierre expounds upon the charmed minutiae of scented kitchens and folded linens sourced from generations of *grands-mamans*, and Alexandre de Vogüé details the stunning extravagance of the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte, the seventeenth-century castle where he and his brothers hid in fireplaces and jumped on royal beds as children. The two will meet somewhere in the middle, reading from Dampierre's "French Chic Living: Simple Ways to Make Your Home Beautiful" and Vogüé's "A Day at Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte" to help bookstore patrons infuse a bit of French living into their New York City studio-closets. (1133 Broadway. 212-759-2424. Nov. 6 at 6.)

Rubin Museum of Art

This summer, *T Magazine* staged a photograph of twenty-eight eclectic minds and unforgettable faces that made up the it-erati of downtown Manhattan's early nineteen-eighties. The author and artist Gary Indiana was present in that scene, and appears in this photo, dead center and just a bit to the left. Like those of his peers, Indiana's life before and after that potent New York era is a winding record of exploration, reinvention, comedy, and tragedy. He will flip through his recent memoir, "I Can Give You Anything But Love," alongside one of his friends, the artist Tracey Emin. (150 W. 17th St. 212-620-5000. Nov. 6 at 9:30.)

Congregation Beth Elohim

In the wake of landmark titles like "The Watchmen" and "The Dark Knight Returns," 1989's lesser-known (read: not yet adapted) work "The Sandman" positioned the graphic novel as a serious vehicle for parsing the metaphysical: namely, what's the deal with dreams? Its best-selling author, Neil Gaiman, published a prequel this year, and returns for a conversation with the Pulitzer Prize winner and self-professed fanboy Junot Díaz. Gaiman will be signing copies of his latest work, as well as originals of "The Sandman," in very fine to mint condition. (274 Garfield Pl., Brooklyn. 718-768-3814. Nov. 9 at 7:30.)



TABLES FOR TWO

GABRIEL KREUTHER

41 W. 42nd St. (212-257-5826)

HOW CAN BIG-DEAL FANCY-FOOD French restaurants perpetuate themselves in a time that is kind neither to fancy (as opposed to fantastical) nor, really, to French food? One answer is to add a regional accent to a cosmopolitan menu. Guy Martin, the chef at Paris's Grand Vefour, perhaps pioneered this move—while his food is distinctly restaurant-French, his origins in Savoy are emphasized at every meal. Gabriel Kreuther, ex of the Modern and chef of the eponymous new restaurant on West Forty-second Street, tries the same kind of thing with the cooking of his native province of Alsace. Though Alsatian cooking is usually associated with sausages and choucroute, Kreuther fills the interstices in his meals with its bread: fine Alsatian kugelhopf, just to announce that he's a localist, even if his is a faraway locality.

Mostly, Kreuther serves an impeccable version of the international style that might be called post-nouvelle, sporadically molecular, architectonic cooking. Post-nouvelle because, indeed, the old protein chunk with cream sauce is gone; waveringly molecular because, though nothing particular may be fished from the Adrià-tic ocean of ideas, eccentric juxtapositions of textures and tastes show lessons learned from the high Spanish style; and architectonic because everything in the presentation tends toward the starkly geometric and three-dimensional.

Dorade with a green-tomato "marmalade" turns the usually bland neutrality of the simple white fish into complex sweetness, by contrast with the acid-sharp tomatoes. Lamb actually roasted in a small haystack—whether the hay is essential or ornamental is another question—manages to be both delicate and gamy, as lamb should be and too rarely is, while the skirt steak recalls the best of modish braised short ribs. Some of the most delicious things are the little sides presented solemnly as amuse-gueules or extras: an exquisite small plate of fromage blanc with lemongrass syrup, and pumpkin-seed bread with chili-garlic lard. Desserts are very much in the Modern (and postmodern) fashion, familiar palettes of flavors—apples with caramel, chocolate with kirsch—segregated into their parts and built up into fantasy stacks of perispheres and trylons, there for the diner to knock down and reassemble.

All of this is presented in a beautiful space within what was once a lobby; a gentle play of borrowed wood beams and scrims makes the restaurant feel anything but entry-like. The designer wisely decided not to shut off the space from the street beyond, so that one can actually see the hot-dog dealer on the other side of Forty-second Street, rendered by the veiled light and scrims as plaintive and pointillist as a Hopper drawing. "This place reminds you of what adult life was supposed to be like," your companion says as you leave, and though a glimpse of the adult life you didn't get isn't always what you want in dining, when you do, you can get it, beautifully, here.

—Adam Gopnik

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES POMERANTZ



FOOD & DRINK

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What does a divine dragon have to do with a drunken one? According to Chinese folklore, the blood of the former saved an entire village from the plague, spurring the ancient ritual of the annual Drunken Dragon festival. At Macao Trading Co., a plush take on the Portuguese colony turned Chinese gambling capital, the Drunken Dragon's Milk is a deceptively potent concoction of young-coconut purée and green-tea-infused vodka. Created by the proprietors of Employees Only, the bar-restaurant suggests the sumptuous surfeit of old-world Shanghai (antique roulette wheels, birdcages, porcelain Buddhas), while also dipping into darker indulgences for which the sin city of Macau is known (opium pipes, sepia photos of provocatively clad women). Under the soporific spin of retro ceiling fans one Thursday evening, a couple on a blind date ordered the Yellow Fever #2 (sassafras syrup, ginger root, bourbon) and the Mah-johng (Scotch, Mandarin Napoléon, Macao five-spice bitters). Because the woman complained of an egregious case of the Asian flush, and her date could not stomach the idea of letting a fifteen-dollar cocktail go unfinished, the pair sat for some time fiddling with matchbooks packaged as firecrackers and listening to Bon Jovi. "So did you choose this place because you like Macanese cuisine?" the woman asked. The man looked blank and shook his head. "I've never been to Asia."

—Jiayang Fan



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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT POWERFUL GESTURES

In November of 1979, First Lady Rosalynn Carter made a trip to a refugee camp near the Thai-Cambodian border. The fall of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to Communist forces, four years earlier, produced three million refugees—Vietnamese boat people fleeing persecution, Hmong people escaping the Pathet Lao, and Cambodian victims of genocide, war, and famine. No one wanted these uprooted souls. Neighboring countries turned away flimsy, overcrowded Vietnamese fishing vessels; the Thai government refused to recognize the Cambodians as refugees, while its military pushed many back across the border into minefields; and Western governments preferred to send aid rather than provide rescue.

Americans, after years of futile war in Vietnam, were weary of the whole region. In spite of Washington's obvious responsibility, some politicians, liberals and conservatives, didn't want to spend money on foreigners during an economic slump. In 1975, Jerry Brown, then as now the governor of California, said, "We can't be looking five thousand miles away and at the same time neglecting people who live here." After President Gerald Ford authorized the entry of about a hundred and thirty thousand Southeast Asians, a member of Brown's staff tried to prevent a plane carrying refugees from landing at Travis Air Force Base. Senator Jesse Helms objected, without apology, on racial grounds. "This nation has experienced more and more social problems as a result of the melting-pot theory," Helms said. "There is widespread concern over the adaptability of such a group to American values." There were even fears of Communist subversion.

President Jimmy Carter championed human rights, but his Administration had been reluctant to open America's doors to Cambodians fleeing starvation and fighting between Vietnam's army of occupation and the guerrillas of the Khmer Rouge. In late 1979, as the

crisis turned catastrophic, Carter came under pressure from his Democratic rival, Senator Edward Kennedy, and he sent his wife to the chaotic border camps. Rosalynn Carter walked among the hungry and the dying, trailed by a hundred and fifty reporters. She held a starving baby in her arms while speaking to the infant's mother, who lay on the ground. "Give me a smile," she told another woman, kissing her forehead. Afterward, Mrs. Carter said that she wanted to hurry home "and tell my husband." The spotlight that her trip shone on the camps helped to mobilize international aid and resettlement efforts. In the end, the U.S. admitted more than a million Southeast Asian refugees. Most of them proved adaptable to American values.

It's easy to forget that every act of American generosity toward refugees has had to overcome stiff resistance based in ignorance. Historically, Presidential action has made the difference. After the Second World War, Congress passed legislation that made resettlement in the U.S. harder for Jewish victims of Nazism than for Germans uprooted by the war Hitler started. The chairman of the Senate's immigration subcommittee, Chapman Revercomb, of West Virginia, wrote, "Many of those who seek entrance into this country have little concept of our form of government. Many of them

come from lands where Communism had its first growth and dominates the political thought and philosophy of the people." It took the angry persistence of President Harry Truman to get Congress to expand the numbers and remove the discriminatory provisions.

There are four million refugees from the Syrian civil war, surpassing the staggering Indochinese numbers, and making this one of the biggest humanitarian crises since the end of the Second World War. Last month, as many as nine thousand people a day were crossing the Mediterranean to Europe. But the U.S. has accepted fewer than two thousand Syrians. In September, President



Obama announced an increase in the quota for the coming year to ten thousand. That figure represents just half the *monthly* total of Indochinese refugees brought here in 1980. One refugee advocate called it “an embarrassingly low number.” And yet even this humble goal is unlikely to be reached.

It can take up to two years for Syrian refugees to be vetted. The ostensible reason for the delay is concern for national security, but in fact the obstacles are mostly bureaucratic. Throughout the region, refugee-processing centers are understaffed and underfunded. For more than a year, interviews with refugees in Lebanon—where a million displaced Syrians live—have been suspended while the U.S. Embassy undergoes renovations. The interviews could be conducted through video conferences; the State Department could deputize and train private organizations to carry out the initial screening and relieve overwhelmed United Nations field offices; the Administration could establish a visa program that would accelerate the petitions of Syrians with relatives in this country. These technical fixes would be relatively easy to make. The President could also declare a humanitarian emergency and, under the Refugee Act signed by Carter in 1980, increase the quota of refugees beyond the annual limit. What’s missing is political will.

Just as the destruction of Cambodia was an indirect result

of the Vietnam War, the American war in Iraq has contributed to Syria’s agony, if only by creating a space for the Islamic State. The Obama Administration is allowing the Atlantic Ocean to shield us from the human consequences, as if geography and moral responsibility were the same thing. Long ago, the President decided that American military intervention couldn’t resolve the Syrian war. That’s not a reason to exercise humanitarian restraint as well. Obama doesn’t call Syrian refugees “jihadists that are coming here to murder innocent Americans,” as Senator Ted Cruz does, or warn, with Donald Trump, that “this could make the Trojan horse look like peanuts if these people turned out to be a lot of ISIS.” But the government’s inaction sends the same message.

This week, Michelle Obama is travelling to Jordan and Qatar to promote education initiatives for girls. In the spirit of Rosalynn Carter thirty-six Novembers ago, she should also consider a side trip to a Syrian refugee camp on the Jordanian border, where she could speak with a mother and hold a child. If that’s not feasible, she could sit down with a Syrian family at a refugee support center in Istanbul, or at the U.N. field office in Beirut. Her very presence would tell the world that her husband and, by extension, the country he leads care.

—George Packer

REWIND DEPT. FUN CITY



Among the showbiz caricatures that wreath the walls at Sardi’s are likenesses of the city’s mayors. John Lindsay’s hangs near the entrance to the dining room. Just west of it is what used to be Lindsay’s table. Last Wednesday—wind and rain, the Mets down a game, Republican candidates mustering in Boulder—three old Lindsay hands sat there poaching one another’s fries and reminiscing about the Fun City days, while, at a neighboring table, a group of tourists obliviously praised another ex-mayor.

“Giuliani really cleaned this place up.”
“Should’ve been President.”

The old hands felt that way about their man, and still do. Fifty years ago this week, Lindsay, a Republican, defeated Abe Beame and William F. Buckley in the mayoral election, ushering in an era of youth and transformation in City Hall. In commemoration, Jay Kriegel, his former chief of staff, has assembled a book of recollections by friends

and colleagues, from Robert Abrams to John E. Zuccotti. He also organized a reception at Gracie Mansion on Monday for several hundred former adherents. Sardi’s was a mini.

Sid Davidoff, the lawyer and lobbyist, arrived first: houndstooth jacket, no tie, mostly black hair slicked back on top, with some salad by the ears.

“I’m gonna have a man’s drink,” he said. He ordered a sauvignon blanc and recalled that he’d sat with Lindsay at this table to plot his unsuccessful 1980 Senate bid. Davidoff was Lindsay’s political aide and right hand, the street guy. On Nixon’s enemies list, he was “a first class S.O.B., wheeler-dealer and suspected bagman.” He once took a decommissioned garbage truck and drove it down to Mississippi to give as a gift to Medgar Evers’s brother, Charles.

Kriegel was next: Mets hat, orange slicker, white hair, Renzo Piano tie. A longtime operator and now an adviser at Related, the real-estate firm, he’d been the Harvard whiz kid—twenty-five when Lindsay took office.

Gordon Davis, the lawyer and civic grandee, appeared, in an elegant raincoat. He took in the *matinée* crowd. “This is not a private room,” he said.

Club sandwiches and stories. Davis

said, “I worked on Lindsay’s seconding speech for Agnew. That was the first time I ever heard the term ‘a man who’ speech. ‘He’s a man who . . .’”

Davidoff: “Agnew? You shouldn’t let that get out.” Davidoff called Agnew a “fascist.”

Davis started out, in 1967, in the Bureau of the Budget. “It was the cutting edge of Lindsay’s effort to modernize city government,” he said. He had quit his job as a first-year associate at a Chicago law firm. “There were shoeboxes of invoices from various poverty programs. Shoeboxes!”

“Most of us were under thirty,” Davidoff said. “Every one of us believed he could make a difference.” He recalled the reelection campaign, in 1969. Roy Innis, a black activist, declared publicly that the campaign would not be welcome in Harlem.

“So first thing we do is we go to Harlem,” Davidoff said.

“We come out of the church, and there’s Roy Innis with his band of thugs. But Lindsay has a bigger band of thugs. Innis had a car with a sound system on top of it. And so one of our guys, a guy in a Gestapo leather trenchcoat, opens an attaché case, and inside there is a hatchet. He takes the hatchet and he cuts the cord on the sound system.”

"You know who he was?" Davidoff said.

"I don't want to know," Davis said.

"Who was he?"

"I can tell you."

"I don't want to know."

Davidoff said, "The great thing is John never asked, 'What just happened?'"

"He let us have a lot of room."

"It may have been a mistake, in some cases," Kriegel said.

"Some cases?" Davis said. "Shit."

Davidoff ordered a green tea, and the men did a double take. "What happened to you?" Kriegel said.

They recalled Lindsay's night secretary, Irving Oppenheimer, known as Oppy. Four feet eleven inches tall, he had a twin named Ziggy, and he drove a Cadillac Eldorado with a blonde in the passenger seat. He'd previously been Tom Dewey's stenographer and a medical transcriber at the city morgue. "He was the Grand Central station of information at night," Davidoff said. "He kept track of everyone who had told their wives they were with the Mayor that night."

They also recalled the fifteen-year-old gofer in a suit whom they called Squirt. This was Jeffrey Katzenberg, the Hollywood mogul. They told a story about breaking into a school in Canarsie one weekend, so that the Mayor could film a campaign ad inside. Davidoff said he hoisted Katzenberg onto his shoulders and through a transom. (Recently, Katzenberg told Kriegel, "It never happened.")

He then told a story about Lindsay's body man, a cop named Pat Vecchio. ("He'll be at the reception," Kriegel said. "He wanted to know how much parking's gonna cost.") In Davidoff's account, he and Vecchio had been beaten up by the Secret Service at the Republican Convention in Miami. Kriegel and Davis didn't believe this. Davidoff spent a few minutes trying to get Vecchio on his cell. Finally, he put Vecchio on speaker. Vecchio corroborated it, sort of, and then, as the men put on their coats, he went on to tell a story about realizing, in Miami, that his gun had got pitted from salt water. He'd tried testing it in his hotel room by firing it into a mattress. Nothing.

—Nick Paumgarten

HAUL MUSEUM NEXT DOOR



Eric Edwards rarely lets his vast collection of African art leave home, but one morning recently he considered the two thousand or so pieces in his Bedford-Stuyvesant loft and chose fifteen candidates for furlough. He was en route to Celebrate Africa Month, an event that he founded in an effort to bridge the peoples of Africa and Brooklyn, and to showcase his obsession of the past forty-four years. The afternoon would feature drummers, xylophonists, dancing, speeches, and artifacts and art labelled "From the Eric Edwards Collection."

"This has gotta go, Mel," he told Mel Symonds, a friend who works for him as a gallery assistant. Symonds hoisted a Dogon maternity figure, and Edwards said, "She's a queen with a prince and princess on her lap." Next came an earth-toned painting of a woman nursing. "That's by Metu. He's one of the finest airbrush painters in the country."

Edwards had on black cargo pants and a gray shirt, and eyeglasses that kept trying to migrate down his nose. His hair and his goatee are heavy on the salt, light on the pepper. He wore a gold pendant of Nefertiti that he hasn't taken off since he bought it, in Egypt, in 1982. A thick ring—awarded after he'd spent nearly thirty years as an A. T. & T. executive—thunked against objects as he handled them. Out went a Bamileke meditation helmet (early nineteenth century). Out went an Ivory Coast ceremonial mask (early twentieth).

"My father emigrated from Barbados when he was seventeen," Edwards said. "He felt we needed to know where we came from, and to have pride in ourselves. He wanted us to be inoculated against racism by learning African history and culture." After college, Edwards worked in the music industry, producing seventies-era funk rec-

ords by his brother, Boobie Knight. "I belonged to audiophile societies," he said, as Symonds dollied a granite carving of a Nubian royal toward a U-Haul van. "I noticed that the doctors and engineers in those societies had a lot of African art in their houses. I started collecting. The first piece I bought was in 1971: a Senufo maternity figure, for three hundred dollars, from a gallery downtown."

Edwards bought mostly through auctions and galleries, but as his interest deepened people gave him artifacts. "I developed relationships with a lot of royal families," he said. He pointed to a towering Nigerian instrument and said, "The palace drum. Got it from the King himself." (The Metropolitan Museum recently considered borrow-



Eric Edwards

ing it, having bought a batá drum from Edwards in 2012.)

Artists live their art; collectors live with it. As Edwards's collection expanded to include headdresses, helmets, and tusks, and as statues took over every inch of floor space like a slowly expanding army, he outgrew several apartments. Even in his current home, a five-thousand-square-foot loft, the collection crowds out most of the living area, except for a love seat facing a small TV. "I give no indication of what's in here," he said. "I'm just another neighbor."

Out went a carving of Yaa Asantewaa, Ashanti warrior queen. "I'm having it all appraised," he went on. "I'm guessing it's worth around ten million dollars, based on how pieces

of similar quality and nature have accrued in value."

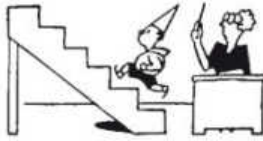
At around noon, he and the U-Haul arrived at 290 Broadway. The Ted Weiss Federal Building houses the African Burial Ground, a national monument marking where an estimated fifteen thousand Africans, free and enslaved, were buried in the sixteen-hundreds and seventeen-hundreds. Edwards set up his treasures in the rotunda, before a memorial to the African diaspora made of inlaid terrazzo. Once the art had been secured on pedestals and behind Plexiglas, he slipped away to put on a sports jacket.

When Edwards returned, the poet Abiodun Oyewole introduced him to a crowd of more than a hundred as the day's honoree. He accepted a certificate that read, "Actor Danny Glover Power of Dream Award." City Councilman Robert Cornegy pledged to back Edwards's efforts to turn his collection into a Cultural Museum of African Art, in Bed-Stuy.

At the registration desk, a woman was selling programs. "These are the free programs," Edwards said, touching a stack of photocopied excerpts. "And these are the programs we're selling for ten dollars each," he said of the glossy, printed version. "They have pictures of the art in it. They're collector's items."

—Paige Williams

LEGACY DEPT. PENCILS UP



Green-Wood Cemetery is up the hill of Twenty-fifth Street off Fifth Avenue in Brooklyn and through a grand stone entrance, like something out of medieval times. On a recent Sunday, in the chapel, in front of a stained-glass window depicting the Resurrection, two young women stood at a table on which were arranged two dozen different kinds of pencils for sale, along with a few quality handheld sharpeners, erasers, and black pencil cases embossed with "CWPE2015": Caroline Weaver Pencil Enterprise 2015. After a feeding frenzy by the crowd of pencil enthusiasts—artists, writers, history buffs, Brooklyn boosters, grave-rubbers, schoolgirls, and fans of David Rees, the author of "How to Sharpen Pencils"—Caroline Weaver, serious-looking, with straight black eyebrows, offered a brief history of the pencil, concentrating on the pencil business in nineteenth-century New York, one of whose leading figures was Eberhard Faber, an occupant of Green-Wood Cemetery since 1879.

Weaver had brought with her a few boxes of vintage pencils: Dixon's

"Ticonderoga" Pencils, made by the Joseph Dixon Crucible Company, in Jersey City, with graphite mined in Ticonderoga; Blu-Blak Noblot Indelible Pencils, which struck fear into the heart of anyone who accidentally tattooed herself in childhood; and original Eberhard Faber Black Wings ("Feathery Smooth Pencils"), bearing an image of a boat with a black sail skimming over a line of evenly spaced waves.

Weaver had prepared a PowerPoint presentation, which she embarked on somewhat tentatively. A shot of the world's oldest surviving pencil (it is a tool that tends to get used up before anyone thinks to put it in a museum) and one of the graphite mine in Borrowdale brought us, via Nuremberg, to New York, where John Eberhard Faber, a fourth-generation German pencil-maker, opened a stationery store in 1850. The United States had homegrown pencil-makers in John Thoreau (the father of Henry David), who developed the graphite-grading system, and Joseph Dixon, but Eberhard Faber, who opened a pencil factory in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, came to dominate the market. He advertised the Mongol—a yellow pencil named for his favorite soup, purée Mongole—by highlighting its silence, of all things. A vintage ad in Weaver's collection shows a girl writing with a Mongol while a boy next to her cups his ear so that he can hear her scratching.

Faber had a machine that produced a special flat ferrule—the metal band at the top of the pencil—and a clip that made it possible to extend the eraser. (The eraser had been improved by adding pumice to the rubber, to give it grit.) When that machine broke, the Black Wing went out of production. A few years ago, Cal Cedar, a California pencil-maker, revived these quality pencils, which are now manufactured in Japan.

Weaver took questions. Someone asked about the tattoo of a pencil on the inside of her left forearm. She said it was her "gateway pencil": a matte black Ticonderoga, now discontinued, that her mother had favored. A pencil achieves its ideal length, according to Weaver, when it has been sharpened three times.

"Are you opposed to pens?" a man asked. Weaver said she was not. There are probably more fountain-pen fetishists than pencil fanciers, she added. Ink



"No way! Marco and I met in Venice, too."

lovers need not feel threatened by the graphite crowd.

It was time to visit the Faber monument, where Weaver was going to do a grave-rubbing with an original Eberhard Faber Black Wing. The office-supply nerds followed, on a path alongside a pond. Two women accompanying their young daughter said that her school, P.S. 10 in Brooklyn, required every student to have “two dozen pre-sharpened pencils.” Of a brand of pencils manufactured in Mexico, someone muttered, “They break a lot.” A filmmaker wearing a “JODOROWSKY” T-shirt said that he likes to make notes in the margins of books and needs a pencil that won’t smudge. He was carrying a Mitsubishi Uni HB.

The monument is granite, tall and tasteful, with an urn on top. Izzy Natale, one of three pencil ladies who help Weaver in the shop (there are no pencil dudes), had carved a Black Wing down to a long rich graphite rod that could be wielded broadside against the stone. Weaver tore two sheets from a pad of special grave-rubbing paper, taped them to the base of the monument, and rubbed. The block letters emerged:

EBERHARD FABER

Died March 2d 1879

Aged

56 Years 2 Mos & 24 Days

His obituary ran in the *Times* on March 4th of that year. He died mysteriously. Doctors ordered him to go to Europe for his health, but it did not improve, and in the end they were completely baffled by the cause of death. “Lead poisoning,” someone said.

—Mary Norris

DEPT. OF FOURSOMES HARMONIOUS



The young men of Darlingside have been going to the Levain bakery, on West Seventy-fourth Street, for milk and cookies since they were in a Williams College a cappella group, almost ten years ago. Now that they’re a grownup act—a four-man harmony group, with a new album just out and a national tour under way—they’re nostalgic for sim-

pler times. So one recent Thursday they were waiting in line on the steps leading down to the bakery, from which wafted a rich, tingly cloud of sugar.

Harris Paseltiner, a classically trained cellist, who is the youngest (the others call him “the boy”) and the most talkative of the rigorously egalitarian foursome, described the cookies.

“They have a hard exoskeleton,” he said, “but they’re gooey and gelatinous inside.” The faraway look that he wears onstage came into his eyes.

“Would you use those words to describe our music?” Don Mitchell (guitar and banjo) asked.

“If you have a guitar that’s going through a fuzzbox, so that it’s superwarm and gooey, and you mix that with a cello that’s groaning with reverb, it can sound kind of buttery,” Paseltiner said.

The members of Darlingside perform original songs around a single microphone, accompanying their close harmonies with a mix of classical, folk, and hipster instruments, including a Brazilian tambourine, a harmonium, and a mandolin. As with cookies, their sound is all about texture. When their drummer left the group two years ago (“our erstwhile drummer,” as they refer to him), the remaining four redesigned the music around their voices, becoming a sort of neo-barbershop quartet. Sometimes the sunshine breaks out in their harmonies, and it feels like 1965 with David Crosby and the Byrds. At other times, as in “The God of Loss,” the weather is gloomier.

The band plumped for four of the bakery’s signature six-ounce cookies, and four milks. “Whole, please,” Paseltiner added. “And an itemized receipt.” Then they strolled toward Central Park.

“We don’t tend toward cities,” Paseltiner said as they crossed Columbus Avenue, explaining that after Williams they had all lived together in a house in Hadley, Massachusetts, where the band got started. “We moved in, set up a studio in the basement, said, ‘O.K., we’re doing this as a career,’ and then realized we didn’t know what kind of music we wanted to play.” A sort of folk pop, as it turned out.

Now they all live near one another, in Cambridge. On occasion, they write lyrics at the local climbing gym.

“We’ll climb, hop off, write some lyrics, and then climb again,” Auyon

Mukharji, the band’s Suzuki-trained violinist, said. “The puzzle of how to go up the wall is like the puzzle of writing lyrics—go here, then here, then here.”

“It was all good until three of us got finger injuries,” Paseltiner said.

Finding a leafy bower just inside the park, the four nibbled their cookies and sipped their milk, and seemed to become enveloped in a Proustian daydream. Their reverie was soon disturbed by an anxious-looking off-leash Alsatian,



Darlingside

which approached with a soft Frisbee in its mouth. Mitchell winged the Frisbee, and the dog darted away.

“That’s a cute dog,” Paseltiner said.

The dog became less cute each time it returned and buried the saliva-soaked Frisbee in Mitchell’s crotch.

“He’s certainly eager,” Mukharji noted.

Mitchell began to cast searching glances in the direction of the dog’s oblivious owner. Meanwhile, Dave Senft, the bass player, explained that the group had originally wanted to call themselves Darlingside, a neologism based on Arthur Quiller-Couch’s advice to self-indulgent young writers—“murder your darlings”—which they had first heard in a songwriting class at Williams. But they worried that fans would pronounce the name “Darling-kyed” or “Darling-seed-a.”

Soon another dog came over to sniff the Alsatian’s behind, but caught a whiff of something more appealing—the half-eaten chocolate-chip cookies—which it proceeded to devour. The members of Darlingside decided it was time to move on.

—John Seabrook

THE REPUBLICAN CLASS WAR

In 2016, will conservatives finally face the realities of inequality?

BY GEORGE PACKER



One recent morning at the Jefferson Hotel, in Washington, D.C., Peter Wehner, a conservative writer who served as an adviser for the past three Republican Presidents, described his party's problems over a bowl of oatmeal. He said, "We got clobbered in 2012"—the fifth Presidential election out of the past six in which the Republican candidate lost the popular vote. "There's a demographic problem. White votes are going down two points every year. We're out of touch with the middle class." Mitt Romney—whose very hair embodies wealthy privilege—was nominated at a national convention, in Tampa, that became an Ayn Rand-style celebration of business executives, the heroic "makers."

During the campaign, Romney wrote off forty-seven per cent of the country—the "takers"—as government parasites. He went on to lose badly to President Barack Obama, whom Republicans had regarded as an obvious failure, a target as vulnerable as Jimmy Carter. In the shock of that defeat, Wehner said, some conservatives realized that "there was a need for a policy agenda that reaches the middle class." He added, "This was not a blinding insight."

A generation ago, Democrats lost five of six Presidential elections; in 1992, Bill Clinton, calling himself a New Democrat, ended the streak. Clinton didn't repudiate the whole Democratic platform—government

activism on behalf of ordinary Americans remained the Party's core idea—but he adopted positions on issues like crime and welfare that were more closely aligned with the views of the majority, including some rank-and-file Democrats. The message, Wehner said, was as much symbolic as substantive: "We're not a radical party; we've sanded off our rougher edges, and you can trust me." He went on, "The hope for some of us was that our candidate in 2016 would be the Republican version of Clinton"—a conservative reformer who, having learned from past defeats, championed economic policies that placed Republicans on the side of the hard-pressed, including non-white Americans, the soon-to-be majority.

For fresh ideas, such a candidate had only to turn to a group of Republican thinkers who call themselves "reformatcons," of whom Wehner is a leader. Last year, the reformatcons published a pamphlet of policy proposals called "Room to Grow," on health care, education, taxes, entitlements, and other topics. In an introduction, Wehner writes, "Americans do not have a sense that conservatives offer them a better shot at success and security than liberals. For that to change, conservatives in American politics need to understand constituents' concerns, speak to those aspirations and worries, and help people see how applying conservative principles and deploying conservative policies could help make their lives better."

The essays don't upend Republican orthodoxy. They argue that government should intervene on behalf of poor and middle-income Americans, but in ways that apply market principles to public policy, taking power away from Washington and giving individuals more options. Some proposals are familiar: school choice, health-care savings accounts. Others are more daring—for example, having college education underwritten by private investors, then repaid over the next decade as a predetermined percentage of graduates' earnings. A few ideas, such as a wage subsidy that would increase the pay of workers making less than forty thousand dollars a year, building on the Earned Income Tax Credit,

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could easily garner bipartisan support.

“Room to Grow” contains a striking description of the American economic landscape: children born into poverty with little chance of escaping it, and middle-class families overwhelmed by the rising costs of health care and education while their incomes stay flat. It’s not that different from the story that Elizabeth Warren, the liberal Massachusetts senator, tells. After years of ignoring these stark realities—or of blaming big government, in the spirit of Ronald Reagan—some Republicans have begun to sound more like Abraham Lincoln or Theodore Roosevelt.

The reformocon project shows how extreme mainstream conservatism has become in its opposition to anything involving the state. The reformocons court right-wing censure simply by acknowledging that the middle class is under pressure, and that government has a role to play beyond cutting taxes. The reckless, and ultimately doomed, shutdown of the federal government by congressional Republicans, in October, 2013, precipitated the first conference of reformocons, in Middleburg, Virginia, and that led to “Room to Grow.”

When the 2016 Presidential campaign began, an organizer of the conference, April Ponnuru, became a policy adviser to Jeb Bush. Governor John Kasich, of Ohio, read an essay by Wehner and Michael Gerson, a speechwriter in the Bush White House, titled “A Conservative Vision of Government,” and expressed approval to an aide. Senator Marco Rubio, of Florida, sought policy advice from several reformocons, including Yuval Levin, who, as editor of the quarterly *National Affairs*, is the group’s foremost intellectual. Earlier this year, Rubio published a book, “American Dreams: Restoring Economic Opportunity for Everyone,” interwoven with the personal stories of struggling Floridians. Most of the policy ideas came directly from “Room to Grow,” a debt that Rubio acknowledged effusively.

To the reformocons, the Republican Presidential race appeared to be stocked with candidates who were eager to take the Party into the twenty-first century. “I thought it was a group of people who

would make that case,” Wehner said. He looked up from his oatmeal with a wan smile. “But then came Mr. Trump.”

Donald Trump’s campaign first attracted attention, in the press and among Republican voters, when he disparaged Mexican immigrants. Since he entered the race, in June, slurs and feuds have been the mainstay of his media image. Less widely discussed are his positions on working- and middle-class concerns like trade, taxes, and entitlements. In his scattershot, get-out-of-my-way fashion, Trump has vowed to rewrite trade deals involving China, impose tariffs on the products of American companies that send manufacturing overseas, leave Social Security and Medicare alone, and raise taxes on hedge-fund managers. (“I want to save the middle class. The hedge-fund guys didn’t build this country. These are guys that shift paper around and they get lucky.”) To the reformocons’ dismay, Trump has commanded their target audience and tainted their high-minded proposals.

Trump’s popularity isn’t based on ideology. According to a recent Quinnipiac University poll, he draws about evenly from Republicans who consider themselves “moderate to liberal,” “somewhat conservative,” and “very conservative.” More than anything, Trump supporters are defined by class: non-college-educated whites favor him at twice the rate of those with college degrees. Trump is attracting the very blue-collar Americans whom the reformocons were aiming to bind to the Republican Party. So far, at least, these voters, many of them angry and alienated, aren’t listening to the “Room to Grow” crowd. They’re thrilling to madder music.

Working-class whites remain the most coveted demographic in American politics, even as they shrink as a percentage of the electorate. Ever since Ronald Reagan became President, Democrats have worried about their declining share of this vote. In 2012, Obama captured just thirty-six per cent of white voters without college degrees, down three per cent from 2008—partly owing to the unpopularity of the Affordable Care Act, and skewed by Obama’s abysmal numbers among white Southern-

ers. The emergence of the reformocons shows that more thoughtful Republicans have also grown concerned about the allegiance of the Party’s presumed base.

Last year, a Gallup poll found that forty-five per cent of Republicans think that the rich should pay more in taxes. Another poll, by the Pew Research Center, showed that more Republicans favor increased spending on Social Security, Medicare, education, and infrastructure than favor cutting those programs. Although government activism is anathema to conservative donors and Grover Norquist, it’s fine with a lot of Republicans making less than fifty thousand dollars a year. April Ponnuru’s husband, Ramesh, a contributor to “Room to Grow” and a senior editor at *National Review*, said, “Trump shows that Republican voters are not especially dogmatic conservatives—not as much as I’d like them to be.”

Reihan Salam, the executive editor of *National Review*, told me, “Trump is not someone I consider an ideal candidate—he does not represent my line of thinking. But he is proving that certain beliefs the professional political class had about who Republican primary voters are—what they respond to, what they care about—were just incorrect.” In 2008, Salam, along with Ross Douthat, the *Times* columnist, published a manifesto that presaged the reformocon movement: “Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream.” Salam grew up in lower-middle-class, multi-ethnic Brooklyn. At Harvard, where he met Douthat, he became interested in wage subsidies “as a way to enhance the legitimacy of market economies,” he said. “There’s a natural marriage between a belief in a dynamic economy and a belief in solidarity and mutual trust, because the one tempers the other. Most human beings seek stability. A society where you allow this idea of a dynamic economy to pervade every aspect of life is very frightening to people, and certainly you’re not going to be able to build a political coalition around it.”

Salam, the son of Bangladeshi immigrants, is critical of increased immigration and believes that Trump, though the wrong messenger, has forced an



important issue into the open. He points to evidence that second-generation Hispanic Americans have less faith in the country's promise than their parents did—that the vaunted American talent for absorbing people from other places is waning under economic pressure. Salam's idea of a national community, united by a sense of mutual obligations and a belief in legitimate institutions, evokes the type of conservatism found in Europe. Trump, meanwhile, calls to mind Italy's Silvio Berlusconi: a strongman, a nationalist, and a nativist, who appeals to voters of limited means by tapping into their gauzy aspirations, echoing their anxieties about decline, and assuring them a secure place in a country restored to greatness. Trump presents himself as a capitalist boss who won't let capitalism tear apart the (white) social fabric.

This approach is far from the contemporary American right's rugged libertarianism, just as Bernie Sanders sounds more like a European democratic socialist than like Bill Clinton. In this way, 2016—even more than the historic election of 2008, during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression—looks like a year of major political recalibration.

Trump's campaign has offered a CAT scan of the Republican Party's central nervous system, revealing its undetected growths, fissures, and abnormalities. His sustained popularity shows how contradictory and irrational the Party has become. It's as if, in 1992, Democrats had thrown their support to Ross Perot, not Bill Clinton, because Perot—while departing from much of the Party's basic ideology and offering only crude policy simplifications—voiced the submerged feelings of many Democrats whose presence hadn't registered with national leaders and pundits.

Some of Trump's positions so sharply violate Republican dogma—and his intemperance so deeply threatens the Party's chances in the general election—that many conservative outlets are trying to destroy his candidacy. The *Wall Street Journal* has denounced him for supporting protectionist trade policies and higher taxes on the wealthy, especially hedge-fund managers and other beneficiaries of the “carried-interest” loophole, which allows them to pay

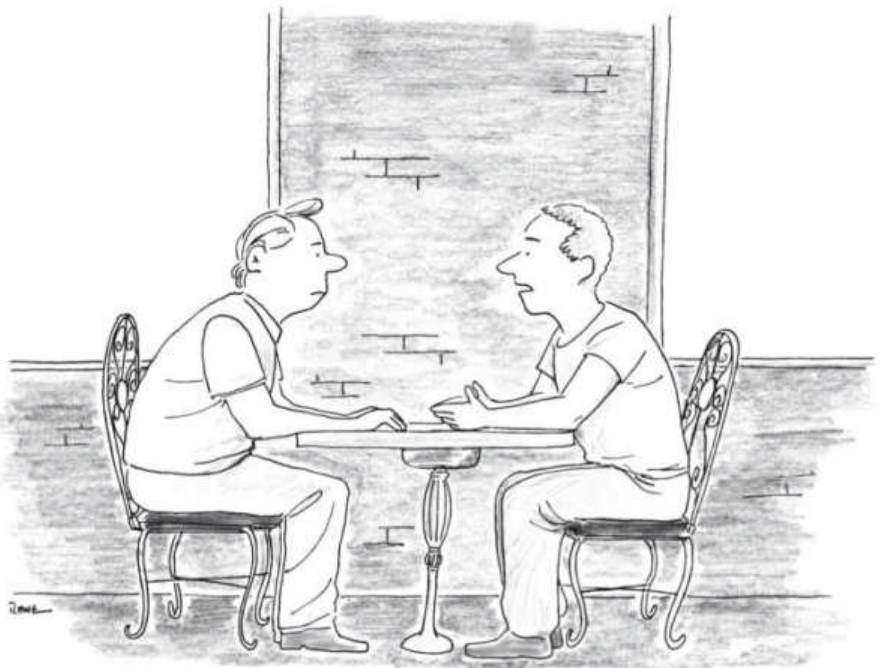
taxes at lower rates than middle-income Americans. The Club for Growth, a conservative pressure group devoted to low taxes and small government, has aired ads deploring Trump's past positions on taxes. (Trump responded with a cease-and-desist letter against the “pitiful little group.”)

No media organization has been more hostile to Trump than Fox News. After the second Republican debate, Rich Lowry, the editor of *National Review*, declared on Fox that Carly Fiorina had cut Trump's “balls off with the precision of a surgeon.” Megyn Kelly, the Fox anchor, who has been the target of a stream of abuse from Trump, exclaimed, “You can't say that!” Trump later tweeted, “@FoxNews has been treating me very unfairly & I have therefore decided that I won't be doing any more Fox shows for the foreseeable future.” (Trump held out for a week before ending his boycott.)

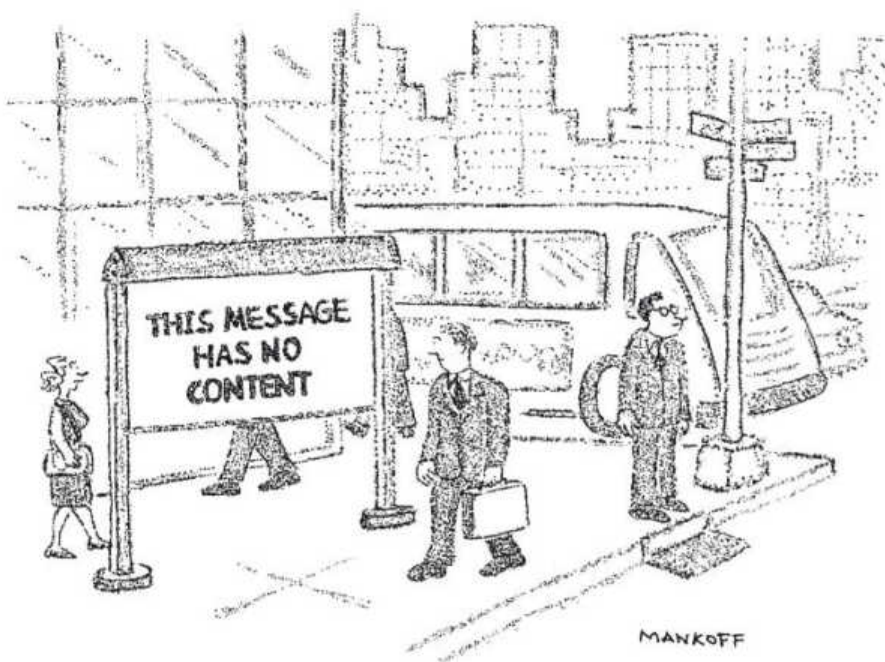
“This is like a lunar eclipse,” Wehner told me in August, when many Republicans still believed that Trump would fade by September. “The damage he's doing—while he's leading in the polls, that's the face and voice of the Party, and it's toxic.” Wehner insisted that Trump is the antithesis of real conservatism: his confidence in his ability to fix America's problems single-handedly shows no understanding of the restraints em-

bedded in the Constitution and the separation of powers. “In no traditional sense could you call him a conservative,” Wehner said. “Conservatism in the spirit of Madison is the idea of taking popular passions and channelling them in a constructive way. Trump is doing the opposite—he's taking popular passions and stoking them, by demonizing the Other.” Since then, Trump's front-runner status has been challenged by another outsider, Ben Carson, who presents even more extreme ideas, but with a whisper instead of a shout. In late September, Wehner posted an essay on the *Commentary* Web site called “The G.O.P. Is Killing Itself.”

“Conservatism in the spirit of Madison” has almost ceased to exist. The outlook of the Republican grass roots, and of many Party leaders, is what Richard Hofstadter, writing toward the end of the McCarthy era, called “pseudo-conservative,” because “its exponents, although they believe themselves to be conservatives and usually employ the rhetoric of conservatism, show signs of a serious and restless dissatisfaction with American life, traditions, and institutions.” Republicans today have given the country conservatism in the spirit of Sarah Palin, whose ignorance about the world, contempt for expertise, and raw appeals to white identity politics



“It's not you—it's this wobbly table.”



presaged Trump's incendiary campaign. So did the spectacle, in 2009, of a Republican congressman calling the President a liar during a speech Obama gave to a joint session of Congress, and Party leaders comparing Obamacare to Nazism and slavery. Earlier this year, forty-seven Republican senators wrote the Supreme Leader of Iran and declared that the President didn't speak for the country. There have been regular threats to close the federal government in order to accomplish limited political goals. (In September, another shutdown, over the defunding of Planned Parenthood, was narrowly avoided, despite the support of nearly all the Republican Presidential candidates.) On right-wing radio, Obama is constantly accused of tyranny and treason. Once the restraints are lifted, they're hard to restore. Trump may be the bastard spawn of the Republican Party, but his parentage can't be denied.

In mid-September, I travelled to a small town in southeastern New Hampshire called Raymond, where John Kasich was holding a town-hall meeting in a middle-school auditorium. Eighty chairs were arranged around a stool. One of the early arrivals was a twenty-six-year-old named Mark Lynch, who had come with his grandmother. Lynch, the son of a firefighter and a fac-

tory worker, had a crewcut and stubble, and wore a Red Sox T-shirt that exposed the tattoos on his biceps. He had just finished four years of service in the Navy and was training to be a policeman. Lynch wanted to hear what Kasich had to say, but he was more interested in the billionaire with the copper comb-over.

"Trump is tapping into this belief that politicians are self-serving," Lynch told me. "He's telling these donors, 'I don't need your money, I'll finance my own campaign.' If you look at what's controlling government these days, it's lobbyists and all these big corporations." Lynch liked Trump's positions on trade, taxes, and Wall Street. "People don't want to see billionaires getting richer," he said. "If Donald Trump, a billionaire in his own right, is saying billionaires in Washington and New York should be paying more—that says something."

Lynch sounded a bit like a Sanders guy. When I pointed this out, his grandmother made a face. Lynch said that he couldn't possibly vote for Sanders—"a self-proclaimed socialist from *Vermont*." Lynch was a conservative, not so much on specific policies but in his values and in his ideas about America's character. He didn't want an overweening government creating costly programs and interfering in people's lives. He just wanted a system that wasn't rigged in

favor of the rich and well-connected.

In Lynch's eyes, his antipathy toward this privileged class didn't make him an unwitting Democrat. "I don't think Republicans are the party of big corporations and billionaires," he said. "They're for ordinary middle-class people." The problem wasn't conservatism but the dirty role of money in politics. Change would have to come at the hands of someone who wasn't beholden to the system—a rich outsider like Trump.

Kasich entered the room, dressed casually, all in black. At sixty-three, he's lean and combative, with a slump in his posture and a jutting neck. He served nine terms in Congress, and, as chairman of the House Budget Committee, in the nineties, he was a key lieutenant of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and a crusader for balanced budgets. As he never fails to tell audiences, he helped craft the 1997 deal that brought surpluses to the federal government for the first time in three decades, though most of the credit belonged to a booming economy. Elected governor of Ohio in 2010, and reelected overwhelmingly last year, Kasich turned the state's deficits into surpluses, while cutting taxes. This is the essence of his stump speech.

"I'm running for President 'cause I know how to land the plane," he said, without mentioning the name of the candidate who could well crash it. "I understand that people are frustrated. My dad carried mail on his back. My mother was a blue-collar housewife. I understand anxieties about losing jobs and ringing up college debt. I know all this. But we can beat these things." The way to beat them was to cut the deficit and say no to special interests in Washington. He offered no policy proposals to help the middle class, besides balancing the federal budget and deregulating business.

Kasich added a dose of spiritual uplift to this starchy message. "We need to live a life bigger than ourselves," he said. "Life is not just about me, me, me, me, me. Do you agree with that? It's about living a life that's bigger than yourself.... I am the most flawed in this room, but at least I know I give grace and every day I can start over and try to do something positive." There's a strain of George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism in Kasich. (During a run

for the Presidency in 2000, Kasich admitted to wishing that he'd thought up the term.) He often mentions the working poor in the same breath as the addicted and the mentally ill, as if all three groups needed charitable help. He has supported the expansion of Medicaid in Ohio, to the abhorrence of many conservatives; he likes to say that he'll have this accomplishment in hand when St. Peter asks him what he did for the poor. "Be a center of justice and healing," Kasich told the audience in Raymond.

Kasich, unlike Trump or Sanders, isn't angry on behalf of the middle class. Ramesh Ponnuru told me, "Kasich's problem is that he speaks down to poorer people—not to middle-class self-interest. The Republicans have a middle-class problem. The answer isn't to leapfrog over it."

As Kasich took questions, he kept needling voters, as if the friction helped him to stay engaged. Earlier this year, at a New York dinner with a group of leading economic conservatives, he antagonized his audience by arguing for Medicaid and bipartisanship. Kasich doesn't throw clumsy punches like Trump, but he likes to dance and jab.

A tall, athletic-looking man asked Kasich, "Doesn't cleaning the system out start with changing our campaign-finance system, starting with overturning Citizens United?" He was referring to the 2010 Supreme Court ruling permitting unlimited campaign spending by independent groups.

Kasich's tone was dismissive. "So you change the campaign-finance laws," he said. "How will it work? Probably not all that great. 'Cause what it gets down to is what's in your heart." He went on, "I got bigger fish to fry." He mentioned the budget, entitlements, defense spending. "These are really *big* things. You got to have priorities."

Kasich moved on to a chili cook-off at a nearby farm, where I asked him how he could reach an alienated Republican like Mark Lynch.

"All I can do is tell you what my record is," Kasich answered. "And if it doesn't work I move on to the next person. I can't—" He pointed a finger at me. "What do *you* think I should do?" I started to describe Lynch's views, and when Kasich realized I was talking about an ex-serviceman he found his sound

bite: "Our veterans, they should be top priority."

Lynch later told me that he was "very disappointed" by Kasich's answer to the question about the campaign-finance system. "If you take care of the money issues in politics, it's going to solve the problem of politicians going to Washington and either doing nothing or catering to lobbyists and big donors," he said.

Lynch still liked Trump, but he was beginning to worry that Trump was offending too many people to be elected; Republicans couldn't afford to abandon the Hispanic vote in Colorado and Florida. "My ideal candidate would be somebody who has a lot of Donald Trump's views but is more polished," he said. The best alternative, he felt, was Rubio. When I pointed out that Rubio was a Washington insider, Lynch sighed. "That's the pickle I'm in, and a lot of people are in," he said. "No matter who gets elected, it's just going to be more of the same. That's the problem with Washington, D.C. It's this never-ending cycle of negativity and corruption."

Over the past few years, the key phrase for Democrats has been "income inequality." The relentlessly widening gap between wealthy Americans and the rest—accelerated by the Great Recession and the not-so-great recovery—is at the heart of Sanders's campaign, animates many of Hillary Clinton's policies, and would make Warren an instant contender were she to enter the race. But "inequality" is a word that Republicans don't like to use. Romney, during his Presidential campaign, characterized "inequality" as a code word: "I think it's about envy. I think it's about class warfare."

In 2012, Wehner co-authored an essay in *National Affairs*, titled "How to Think About Inequality." He concludes:

The problem in America today is therefore not wealth but rather persistent poverty. And the right way to deal with income inequality is not by punishing the rich, but by doing more to help the poor become richer, chiefly by increasing their social capital. This means not simply strengthening the bonds of trust and mutual respect among citizens, but also equipping Americans—especially the poor—with the skills, values, and habits that will allow them to succeed.

In other words, the way to think about inequality is by looking down, not up. It's

not the wealth amassed at the top but, rather, the lack of "skills, values, and habits" at the bottom that accounts for the widening income gap. Oddly, Wehner's essay barely mentions the economic struggles of the middle class. A close look at the three middle quintiles of income, where Americans with an education, a job, and a spouse can be found treading water or sinking, would have forced him to reconsider the notion that a lack of "social capital"—as opposed to just capital—explains the entire problem.

Even though the reformocons recognize the difficulties of the middle class, they prefer to focus not on income disparities but on "mobility," which describes how individuals fare across their own life span and in comparison with past generations. Levin told me that the word "growth"—the unconvincing mantra of supply-siders—was losing its hold on conservatives. When Jeb Bush predicted that his economic policies would lead to four-per-cent economic growth, a level not seen since the late nineties, the claim was either ignored or derided. "Mobility" is much healthier," Levin said. "It's the right lens to talk about the economy."

But there's a reason to look up as well as down the economic ladder, and it has nothing to do with envy or with punishing the rich. Economic stratification, and the rise of a super-wealthy class, threatens our democracy. Americans are growing increasingly separated from one another along lines of class, in every aspect of life: where they're born and grow up, where they go to school, what they eat, how they travel, whom they marry, what their children do, how long they live, how they die. What kind of "national community" built on "mutual obligation" is possible when Americans have so little shared experience? The Princeton economist Alan Krueger has demonstrated that societies with higher levels of income inequality are societies with lower levels of social mobility. As America has grown less economically equal, a citizen's ability to move upward has fallen behind that of citizens in other Western democracies. We are no longer the country where anyone can become anything.

Inequality saps the economy by draining the buying power of Americans whose incomes have stagnated,

forcing them to rely on debt to fund education, housing, and health care. At the top, it creates deep pools of wealth that have nowhere productive to go, leading to asset bubbles in capital markets bearing little or no relation to the health of the over-all economy. (Critics call this the “financialization” of the economy.) These fallouts from inequality were among the causes of the Great Recession.

Inequality is also warping America’s political system. Greatly concentrated wealth leads to outsized political power in the hands of the few—even in a democracy with free and fair elections—which pushes government to create rules that favor the rich. It’s no accident that we’re in the era of Citizens United. Such rulings give ordinary Americans the strong suspicion that the game is rigged. Democratic institutions no longer feel legitimate when they continue to produce blatantly unfair outcomes; it’s one of those insights that only an élite could miss. And it’s backed up by evidence as well as by common sense. Last year, two political scientists found that, in recent times, policy ideas have rarely been adopted by the U.S. government unless they’re favored by corporations and the wealthy—even when those ideas are supported by most Americans. The persistence of the highly unpopular carried-interest loophole for hedge-fund managers is simply the most unseemly example.

The reformocons like to quote Lincoln, but not this memorable sentence: “Republicans are for both the man and the dollar, but in case of conflict the man before the dollar.”

Thus far in the campaign, the ideas of the reformocons have scarcely made an appearance among the Republican candidates. In Washington in June, Rubio—the favorite of the reformers—gave a speech to a group of them summarizing the arguments of his book. And he became the first Republican candidate to support paid family leave when, in September, he proposed a tax credit for businesses that offer their employees between four and twelve weeks off to care for newborns or sick family members. (Critics say that the tax credit wouldn’t offset enough of the costs in wages to induce companies to permit such leaves.) For the most part, though,

Rubio has left the proposals in “American Dreams” on the shelf. “Rubio has the most interesting platform, but he’s not *using* it,” Ramesh Ponnuru said. Rubio, the son of a bartender and a maid who both emigrated from Cuba, “has established himself as the articulate, different Republican in a biographical sense,” Ponnuru added. “He’s not working to establish himself as a problem-solver. His campaign guys must be saying, ‘You have a good story, and voters aren’t interested in policy ideas.’”

In April, Rubio announced a tax proposal that hardly diverges from the Republican Party line. It offers families a twenty-five-hundred-dollar tax credit per child. But the proposal also reduces income taxes beyond the levels of George W. Bush’s cuts, making them even more regressive; cuts corporate taxes by ten per cent; and eliminates taxes on most investment income and inheritance. It gives a huge windfall to the rich, amounting to trillions of dollars in tax revenue. At the same time, Rubio promises to increase defense spending and pass a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution. Ponnuru offered an explanation for Rubio’s lapse into conventional conservative thinking: “The problem with the campaign-finance system is that it forces the candidates to spend too much time with rich people.”

Even though Rubio’s tax plan included the usual deep cuts for the wealthy, it was unacceptable to the *Wall Street Journal*, which criticized the child tax credit as a giveaway. Stephen Moore, the former president of the Club for Growth, explained his opposition to the columnist Albert R. Hunt: “The more you increase things like the child tax credit, the more you will move back to the 1960s and 70s tax system with higher tax rates.”

Jeb Bush, another hope of the reformocons, issued his tax plan in September. He framed it as an attempt to support social mobility and the “right to rise”—the name of his Super PAC, which, in the first half of the year, raised more than a hundred million dollars. Such rhetoric fooled some political reporters into characterizing the plan as “populist.” Though it does eliminate the carried-interest loophole, it offers the rich more than ample compensation, in the form of a large cut in income and

capital-gains taxes. According to the *Times*, people making ten million dollars or more a year would see their effective tax rates reduced from twenty-six to twenty-one per cent, saving them an average of a million and a half dollars a year. Bush’s plan would drain up to \$3.4 trillion dollars from the Treasury.

In the end, the reformocon candidates haven’t sounded that much different from Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina, Mike Huckabee, and Rand Paul. All of them have had more to say about defunding Planned Parenthood, shutting down the federal government, repealing Obamacare, balancing the budget, and building a wall along the border with Mexico than about the problems of the middle class. The mantle of economic populism has essentially been handed to Donald Trump.

At a press conference at Trump Tower on September 28th, Trump unveiled his own tax plan. “Too few Americans are working, too many jobs are being shipped overseas, and too many middle-income families cannot make ends meet,” he proclaimed. “This plan directly meets these challenges, and the challenges also of business.” What followed was a tax cut for just about everybody. Seventy-five million Americans—single people making less than twenty-five thousand dollars a year and married couples making less than fifty—would be dropped from the tax rolls altogether. But the biggest winners would be the rich: Trump would reduce the number of tax brackets from seven to four, and would cut the rates of the top earners by fourteen per cent, below the level proposed by Bush. Even Grover Norquist’s Americans for Tax Reform blessed Trump’s plan. In the midst of an anti-establishment revolt, supply-side dogma has an unbreakable hold on Republican politics.

“Trump is as popular in Ohio as anywhere else,” John C. Green, a political scientist at the University of Akron, told me in September, in his office. The Presidential campaign felt far away—Ohio’s primary isn’t until next March—but the state remains key to the general election. “Part of it is that Trump’s an emblem of success, and the other part of it is he taps people’s anger,” Green said. “It’s not the same anger as a few years ago, when it was ‘Where are

the jobs?’ Now it’s ‘Where’s our share of the American dream?’” Green, who does polling research on Ohio and American politics, went on, “A lot of white working-class votes are up for grabs in this election. In recent years, they’ve gone Republican, but this year the Democrats could get a slice of them.” The Republican coalition of business interests and the white working class, he said, “is under more stress this year than it’s been for a while.”

Twenty-five minutes down Interstate 77 is Canton, the city where William McKinley—the first truly modern, pro-business Republican President—lies in a black granite sarcophagus under a marble dome. Canton is one of those American towns where industrial decline and population loss give a sense of uninhabited space. The Hoover vacuum company, once headquartered in North Canton, was acquired in 2007 by a Hong Kong firm that moved production to Mexico and China. An abandoned brick factory is being redeveloped for white-collar service companies and apartments. Alongside the interstate, a former Hoover plant has become a megachurch with a congregation of thirty-five hundred souls, some of whom once assembled vacuum cleaners on the premises.

After a winter of continuous below-zero temperatures, many of Canton’s streets crumbled, and nearly a year later they remain impassable. The Democratic mayor, William Healy, laid the blame for the city’s infrastructure woes on climate change and John Kasich. In balancing Ohio’s budget, the Governor dramatically reduced state contributions to local governments while cutting certain business taxes and eliminating the estate tax. The result, Healy said, was a loss of seventeen million dollars to Canton—twenty per cent of its revenue—bringing spending below the level of 2007. The Mayor had to choose between keeping policemen and firemen employed or repairing broken streets. “That tells you the impact of John Kasich,” he said. “But on the national front, where you’ve got Trump, Kasich comes across as a moderate! Damaging as Kasich has been to my city, as mayor, if I had to vote for a Republican for President I would vote for Kasich over the entire field. That tells you where the Republican Party has gone.”



“You’re trying to take credit for one of mine.”

Around Ohio, local governments are being forced to choose between raising taxes and neglecting services, even though the state now has a two-billion-dollar “rainy-day fund.” In his stump speech in New Hampshire, Kasich claimed that his fiscal policies helped create three hundred thousand jobs. In fact, Ohio remains below its pre-recession employment rate, meaning that the state has lagged behind most of the country during the recovery. Zach Schiller, the head of research at the nonpartisan group Policy Matters Ohio, in Cleveland, told me, “Kasich’s claims to good economic performance? I don’t know if I want to say ‘deceptive,’ but they’re certainly misleading.”

According to Policy Matters Ohio, since 2013 Kasich’s policies, including a higher sales tax and cigarette tax, have raised average annual taxes on the state’s poorest fifth by seventeen dollars, given middle-income people a ninety-four-dollar cut, and returned seventeen thousand dollars to members of the one per cent. “We’ve engineered a tax shift to lower- and middle-income Ohioans,” Schiller said. “And we’ve reduced overall tax revenue.”

Kasich’s tax policies have earned him the approval of Arthur Laffer, a native of nearby Youngstown, whose famous

curve—supposedly demonstrating that lower income taxes generate higher revenue by stimulating economic growth—started the revolution in supply-side economics, forty years ago. Schiller pointed out that nothing in Ohio’s recent economic experience supports supply-side theory. The same is true nationally: growth has accelerated in periods when tax rates have been higher on top earners and stalled when rates came down. Kasich, who has positioned himself as the capable, reasonable, experienced “grownup” on the G.O.P. stage, is a supply-sider at his core. As long as Republicans cling to the warped logic of trickle-down economics, their efforts to help middle-class Americans will be largely rhetorical.

East of Canton, there’s a small steel mill owned by a Pittsburgh company called Allegheny Technologies, Inc. On a strip of grass outside the mill, around a dozen locked-out steelworkers were picketing under a white tent, with American flags, water bottles, and defiant signs: “Unfairly Locked Out for 32 Days”; “Greed, Power & Control Rule A.T.I.—Lockout Proves It!” The Canton area has a history of racial prejudice, but the picket line was one place where it was possible to find black

and white men hanging out together.

A.T.I. had been requiring some of the hundred and thirty workers at the mill to put in twelve-hour shifts or seven-day work weeks. Families were showing the strain. In June, A.T.I. offered the union representing the employees, the United Steelworkers, a new contract, asking for a hundred and forty-five concessions. The company claimed that it was under pressure from foreign and nonunion U.S. competitors. However, executive pay had risen more than fifty per cent during 2014, and the total compensation of the chief executive, Richard J. Harshman, had risen seventy per cent, to nearly eight million dollars, in spite of the company's poor performance. (Nearly half of A.T.I.'s shareholders had voted against the compensation packages.)

"I read those hundred forty-five items and got sick to my stomach," Kurt Reynolds, a burly maintenance worker with a Hemingway beard, said. "I told my wife, 'If this is what they want, they're trying to break the union.'"

In August, A.T.I. made its final offer. Before the United Steelworkers could bring it to a vote, plant managers escorted employees from the mill and brought in replacement workers. The lockout began. Union workers were girding themselves for a long battle. "It ain't nothing but corporate greed," Rick Jones, who has worked at the mill for twenty-two years, said.

The subject of Presidential politics came up. Reynolds said, "Right now, the only one I'm seeing is Bernie Sanders. He has a history of supporting unions." He noted that Kasich had tried to take away collective-bargaining rights from public-sector workers; the idea had been soundly defeated in a statewide referendum. A worker named Mike Yeater said that he liked Trump's positions on "immigration stuff and issues like that—he's got patriotic beliefs." But after Trump told the *Detroit News* that union autoworkers needed to accept lower wages Yeater stopped paying attention to him. Another worker said that he'd been reading Thomas Piketty's "Capital in the Twenty-first Century," and that he liked Sanders but was also interested in Lawrence Lessig, the Harvard professor who is running for President on a platform of radical campaign-

finance reform. No one mentioned Hillary Clinton or Jeb Bush.

A steelworker named Jack Baum was sitting in a folding beach chair on Main Street, his eyes shielded from the sun by a wide-brimmed camouflage hat, his dark hair tied back in a ponytail by a red-white-and-blue bandanna. He had a thick neck and a bushy mustache, and he held a sign that said "Fighting for Good Jobs in Our Community." Every now and then a passing car honked, and Baum waved.

Baum calls himself an independent libertarian. "I believe in the company's right to make money," he said. "It helps all of us. And I also believe in the worker's right to bargain for a fair wage." In 2004, as president of the local, Baum led difficult negotiations; managers and workers eventually came to terms by making concessions—they needed one another to keep the steel industry alive. "This time is different," he said. "They brought new people in to break the union. They do not respect us. They look at us as a number."

Baum believes that "The Jungle," Upton Sinclair's classic novel about the Chicago stockyards, should be required reading for American corporations. "At the turn of the century, the boss would go home and sleep with your wife in order for you to keep your job," he said. Unions, he explained, were "a necessary evil. We need them, 'cause without them—I don't know if you'd see a return to the turn of the century, where children are working, but corporations still have that deep-rooted sense of 'I'll just work you. Family doesn't matter, outside life doesn't matter.'"

Baum is fifty-five, with a grown daughter who's a nurse at Cleveland Clinic. His marriage fell apart under the strain of long shifts, and he lives alone, in a trailer. He has voted Republican all his life, except for two times, when he voted for Ross Perot. This year, Baum was supporting Trump. He didn't agree with everything Trump said, but he liked his position on trade and his tax plan—the way that it cut working-class people's taxes to zero but also gave businesses a financial break, "because it's killing our industries' competitiveness." He thought that Trump was strong enough to bring jobs back to America, and he appreciated his willingness to

tell both parties, "You can't buy me." Baum found Trump's insulting manner refreshing, calling it "a mirror of the way they treat us."

Baum wanted to see a forty-year mandatory minimum sentence for anyone who took money from lobbyists. "The rich élitists are not just Republicans," he said. "They're Democrats, too." He continued, "Our Founding Fathers told us we should be able to go from modest means to riches with our own efforts. This is a country of capitalists—everybody should be rich. The problem is, the rich don't want anybody rubbing shoulders with them. The middle class hits that wall and can't get over it. We've been cornered. If you're in a corner, you have no choice but to fight your way out."

In an essay in "Room to Grow," Yuval Levin describes what makes conservatives different from liberals. Conservatives don't emphasize the individual and the state; they focus on the space between—where families, communities, religious groups, associations, and private enterprises create a web of interrelationships. "What happens in that space generally happens face to face—between parents and children, neighbors and friends, buyers and sellers," he writes. "It therefore answers to immediately felt needs, and is tailored to the characters, sentiments, priorities, and preferences of the people involved. This kind of bottom-up common life, rather than massive, distant systems of material provision, is what makes society tick."

Levin's description of American life sounds appealing, but it does not reflect the reality of the steelworkers' lives. The "massive, distant system of material provision" is their company, which is far more top-down than any federal bureaucracy. Nothing happens face to face; immediately felt needs go ignored; families don't matter. There is no "common life" except for the workers' desperate effort to stick together as they look ahead to weeks or months without pay—or, perhaps, a future without a job. Global competition is making these workers disposable, and so they are turning for insight and inspiration to Sanders, or Piketty, or Trump. The reformocons, for all their creativity and eloquence, don't grasp the nature of the world in which their cherished middle-class Americans actually live. They can't face its heartlessness. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

UNPLANNED PARENTHOOD

BY ALEXIS WILKINSON



Welcome to Unplanned Parenthood, your one-stop shop for all of life's little prohibitively expensive, often preventable surprises. We are the No. 1 privately funded prenatal facility for women who don't realize that Planned Parenthood has been run out of town. Thank you for your interest in making a donation to our new clinic. Please, let me show you around!

Having gone to considerable lengths to use government blackmail in order to exercise our faith and impose it on the entire populace, we've found that nothing ruins the miracle of birth quite like preparation. Our facilities offer every resource a woman needs to keep her legs closed until a baby somehow (who really knows?) gets in there and then pops out like a wailing, money-sucking jack-in-the-box. *Surprise, Mom! Welcome to the rest of your life.*

Here at Unplanned Parenthood, if you're married to a heterosexual cisgender person of the opposite sex, you're in luck. We've got a whole room where you can comfortably give birth. Your doctor will be right by your side to help you through this beautiful process, provided you can pay, up front, the fifteen-thousand-dollar service fee. Cash preferred.

Sorry, we don't take Medicaid or Medicare. Nor do we accept Obamacare, which is really just taxpayer dollars being squandered on patients preparing for death, which we believe should also be a surprise, as God intended. In

fact, instead of "death," we like to call it "unplanned Paradise." (Ha! "Paradise!" Just a little joke to lighten the mood. Most of these people are definitely going to Hell.)

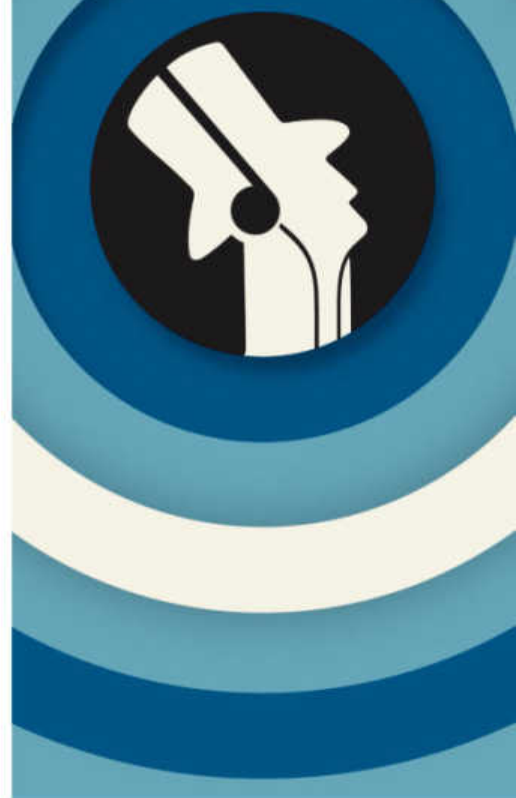
If you don't qualify for the birthing room but are still anticipating an unplanned heterosexual cisgender birth, we have a camping mat on the floor, right next to the Sin Pits.

The Sin Pits? I'm so glad you asked. Since stripping this former abortion depot of its godless death machines, death medicines, and death cancer-screening equipment, we've found that we have a lot of leftover space and a lot of clients who do not deserve to use it. So we've installed half a dozen deep, dark holes, or "Sin Pits," where women who arrive seeking condoms (Satan's rubber sombreros), birth control, routine medical care, S.T.D. testing, or mammograms can go to think about what they've done, or to just die quietly, out of the view of more important, less wicked patients.

So, about your donation . . . What's that? You'll only write a check if we agree to make exceptions for rape and the life of the mother? Well, you see, the Organization for the Rights of Unplanned Penetrators is one of our biggest backers.

What? You've had an abortion yourself? Oh . . . that's . . . [into walkie-talkie] Sheila, we've got another one for the Pits. Bring the stun gun. ♦

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

HANDEL IN KINSHASA

An unlikely orchestra wins the world's attention.

BY ALEXIS OKEOWO

When Armand Diangienda picks up an instrument that he has never played, he looks for its hidden rule. There is always a rule, just as in math: a principle that tells him that when he plays one note, or one chord, the next one naturally follows. His fingers mimic how he's seen others handle the instrument, and then they find the patterns themselves, gaining assurance on the strings, or keys, or valves.

stands that held the score to the “Mar-seillaise.” In keeping with church tradition, everyone was barefoot, and Diangienda slipped off his sandals as he passed through the door. Wearing a blue-and-white striped shirt and beige pants, he settled on a stool facing the musicians and wiped sweat from his brow. “Are you listening to me?” he called out. Musicians leaned into one another, talking and exchanging tips; the sounds

residents call themselves, cross first with a few tentative steps and then at a full sprint. Venders dodge cars and buses as they hawk Ya Mado and Ndombolo CDs; music stalls blast Congolese pop—springy, guitar-driven rhythms made for dancing. One day, on the congested Avenue Kitona, I watched a man in a pin-striped suit elegantly balancing a bass in the midday sun. Soon afterward, a kid leaped toward my car window to try to grab my phone.

The city is divided into moneyed enclaves like Gombe—where the well-off live and where many Kinois work—and the *cité*, where everyone else resides. In the *cité*, people live nearly on top of one another, in a noisy, sleep-defying maze of eateries, bars, hair salons, street venders, churches, and shops. Diangienda lives in a quar-



The grandson of a Congolese prophet, Armand Diangienda gathered musicians to glorify God. They have toured on three continents.

“I thank God for that talent, because I can just look at someone playing and I can figure it out,” he said. That skill enabled Diangienda to learn piano, guitar, cello, trombone, and trumpet, and it was crucial twenty years ago, when he started the Kimbanguist Symphony Orchestra, in Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On a muggy recent evening, he walked to the orchestra’s practice room, a few steps from his office in the compound that contains his family home and the church he helps lead. Dozens of men and women, including young teen-agers and middle-aged mothers, sat in plastic chairs and shared music

of horns and strings clashed as players warmed up. The space was cramped; an oblong yellow-and-beige room with plastic flowers adorning the walls, it had transparent doors that let in a weak breeze from a courtyard. A small crowd from the church was watching outside. “I want us to be very focussed,” Diangienda said. “If someone feels this is not going to work, just tell me, ‘Papa Armand, this is not going to work,’ and I’ll find something else to do, because I’m a realistic person.”

Outside the compound, Kinshasa is a city perpetually under construction and in motion. Many intersections have no traffic lights, and so Kinois, as the

ter called Ngiri-Ngiri, near a vast market that sells meat and vegetables alongside electrical and plumbing parts.

The orchestra used to practice in a hall in town, but that arrangement fell through, so Diangienda’s home has become a conservatory and a practice hall, a place where music and singing are always heard. Diangienda never attended music school, and most of his musical knowledge comes from his childhood church. But Héritier Mayimbi, the concertmaster, told me that he was tireless: “He works only for musicians and his orchestra. He does nothing else.”

Diangienda has the look of a favorite uncle: a broad, genial face, with close-cut

hair, a slightly grayed mustache, and an attentive manner. At the podium, he put on a stern expression. "Food is not going to come from Heaven like it did for the children of Israel," he said. "Do not expect such miracles. People are making and inventing things of many kinds; you and I have chosen music. What I can't stand is people saying that I'm not going to rehearse; I'll just come for the concert." He reminded the musicians that the French Embassy had invited them to perform, during a week of events promoting French economic and cultural activity in Kinshasa. "The compositions we are playing are becoming more and more complicated," he said. "When you come here, some may come on time, but they take too much time chatting with others, and take more time laughing instead of rehearsing." Everyone erupted into laughter. Diangienda allowed himself to smile.

He called out to Mayimbi, "Héritier, will you gather the strings to rehearse?" Mayimbi, short and slender, with a lisp, was floating in the black suit that he sometimes wears to rehearsals. He nodded. Diangienda held up his baton, and they began to play.

Diangienda was born fifty-one years ago, on the same land he lives on now. His old house has been torn down, replaced with a renovated family home and church—a sprawling concrete building painted in the Kimbanguist colors of green and white and surrounded by a green metal fence. In the orchestra's general office is a large portrait of Simon Kimbangu, the founder of the sect and Diangienda's grandfather: full face, hefty build, serious but kind eyes. Kimbangu, who advocated a new African version of Christianity, was regarded by his followers as a prophet anointed by God. In 1921, the Belgians put him in prison, and thirty years later he died as a martyr there, but his movement only gained strength, and it now has about eight million adherents throughout central Africa.

When Diangienda was born, his father had retired from civil administration for the colonial government and was helping to lead the church. His mother took care of the family's seven children and ran a small business selling spices, doughnuts, and other goods.

They were middle class, not rich but stable, and the church provided an enveloping community; Kimbanguists follow strict rules, which forbid alcohol, tobacco, visiting night clubs, and other licentious entertainment. Even while his parents were away, travelling the country's horrible roads to visit branches of the church, there were always adults around—relatives, family friends, church members that his parents took in when they fell on hard times.

Shy and introverted, Diangienda clung to his older brother Samuel, who had learned to play piano by watching their father play. Diangienda started the piano, and then the guitar, picking out church songs. It was an unsettled time in Congo. After the country gained independence, in 1960, a promising leader, Patrice Lumumba, was assassinated with the complicity of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Joseph Mobutu, who had helped plan the coup, soon took power. He banned all political parties and installed a kleptocracy, in which he and his cronies stole so shamelessly that the country's public infrastructure began to collapse.

When Diangienda was fourteen, his parents sent him and Samuel to study at a Christian boarding school in Belgium; some of his siblings had already settled in Brussels. "It was difficult to leave my parents' home," he said. "There was the joy of discovering something new, but we were also afraid, because we were wondering, What if we have no money, what are we going to do?" At school, they lived, studied, and ate in the same building; it was "like a small prison," he said.

Diangienda understood that one day it would be his duty to serve the church. But, for now, he was interested mostly in flying. "The first time I conjugated a verb in the future tense in French, I said, 'I will become a pilot,'" he recalled. When he graduated, he wanted to go to flight school in the United States, but his father refused. "Sometimes he said yes to things, but we knew him so well that we knew yes was a no for him," he said, laughing. So he moved in with his older sister in Brussels and enrolled in a flight school there, attending class when he could afford it. In his free time, he played drums in a reggae group called Burning Ashes, and toured around the

country, once opening for UB40 in Brussels. "Most of our songs were just spreading our message, which was peace, love, brotherhood," Diangienda said. Bena Nsilu, a pastor who knew him at the time, said that Diangienda has always been driven, even when it came to spreading peace and love.

At twenty-six, he got his father's approval to study at a flight school in Florida. What he liked most about being up in the air was the sense of control, and the discipline. Everyone was serious—otherwise you would end up on the ground. He enjoyed Florida, but after he got a commercial license he moved back to Kinshasa. "I had more chances of finding a job here, and I knew my country needed me," he said. He married a childhood love and began piloting planes for TAZ airlines. The runways in the region were little more than strips of dirt, so he flew DC-3s, which could land anywhere. "It wasn't the United States, but it was fun," he told me.

In 1991, rioting soldiers destroyed TAZ's offices and hangars, and Diangienda lost his job. He got a new one at Scibe Airlift, and then the brakes of a plane he was co-piloting failed on the runway and he barely escaped crashing. Later, another pilot, flying a plane that Diangienda normally flew, crashed near the eastern city of Goma, killing everyone on board. Diangienda, with no plane to fly, lost his job again, and he couldn't find any more work as a pilot.

The orchestra began almost as a fluke. Diangienda, unemployed, was devoting his time to the church, and, as he thought of ways to make things better, he sat in his cramped but cozy home office, listening to CDs of classical music which he had brought home from the United States. Music has always been central to Kimbanguist worship. The church's founder was an amateur flutist, and he and his followers believed that songs came to them through divine inspiration. They also had a repertory of songs from outside. During the colonial era, Catholic seminaries and missionary schools had taught European church music, translating choral hymns into Kikongo, the language of the Bas-Congo region, where most Kimbanguists come from. In one collaboration between a Belgian friar and Congolese

musicians, the Latin Mass became the Missa Luba. Kimbanguist services were set to the soundtrack of flute-and-drum groups and brass ensembles, big-sounding bands meant to be heard from miles away.

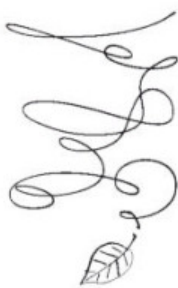
"Their members would many times just play on the street for weddings, baptisms, or other religious ceremonies," Kasongo Kapanga, a professor of Francophone studies at the University of Richmond, who grew up in Congo, told me. "They would parade in the *cit  *. They became part of the musical landscape, and they added an ethical dimension to it, because music is part of their worship and discipline."

Diangienda admired Handel, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky, and didn't see why he couldn't get the musicians he knew to play that same stirring music. With an accompanying choir, an orchestra could be a new means of fulfilling his spiritual mission. "At the beginning, the intention was religious," he said. "The orchestra was the best way for me to do what my father always wanted me to do, which is to gather people together." He also wanted to elevate the profile of his church. He knew that an orchestra would be impressive: Congolese had never seen their countrymen playing this music on this scale.

He recruited musicians from the church's flute and guitar groups and from its band, and organized those who knew the rudiments of music to teach novices. Although Diangienda declared the orchestra open to anyone, nearly all the members came from the church. "When you start such a project, you need to be with people who share the same beliefs, because such projects require a lot of resources," he said. "I found those people within our community."

It wasn't hard for Diangienda to attract people to the cause. His parishioners see him as a teacher and a counselor, part of the key to their salvation. In any case, they listened mostly to devotional music, and for many of them Handel seemed less foreign than the music spilling out of the city's bars. Diangienda welcomed to the orchestra ushers, members of the church Scout groups, security guards, whoever was interested.

"We mainly considered it Western music, but we thought it was a good idea that he was bringing something new from his time living abroad," Seth Matumona, the secretary-general of the orchestra, said. Matumona, a forty-nine-year-old who works as a program assistant at the Swedish Embassy, had practiced English with Diangienda after he moved back from Florida, and the two were close. The idea of an orchestra seemed a little strange; no one had an orchestra. But if they were doing it for fun, without any expectations, why not?



Diangienda's mornings are reserved for his "normal life," apart from music. His children run into his bedroom for blessings, he visits with his wife and other relatives, and sometimes he watches science and history documentaries. In his office, where he works for the church, heavy dusk-colored curtains face a desk crammed with markers, pens, CDs of operas and classical music, a laptop, Bibles, a framed photograph of his father, and stacks of papers from parishioners—r  sum  s, plans for projects—that they have asked him to bless. In 2002, the church underwent a leadership dispute, and Diangienda, along with sixteen of Kimbangu's other grandchildren, formed an independent branch, taking with them several thousand followers. It's part of his "inheritance" to pray for people who have come to tell him their problems, and give advice and encouragement. "We live in a tough country," he said. "People sometimes need strength to continue living and not lose hope, and we're here for that."

Congo, a vast place that is home to some eighty million people, suffered centuries of exploitation by traders from East Africa and Portugal, Belgium's King Leopold II, and the Belgian government—a succession of predators looking for slaves, ivory, and rubber. After independence, the Congolese struggled to build a functioning nation. During Mobutu's tenure, a common joke imagined a constitutional provision—Article 15—that gave officials the right to solicit bribes and to steal. People in the church try to forget those years. Seth Matumona used to work for Mobutu's

extravagant, brutal shell of a government, but he claims to have forgotten exactly what he was assigned to do, and no one asks.

Mobutu was ousted in 1997, at the beginning of a series of conflicts with neighboring states that have raged intermittently for two decades, devastating millions of lives. Mobutu, seeking to prevent internal uprisings, kept state institutions powerless; successive leaders have done little to rebuild them, leaving Congolese to fend for themselves. The current President, Joseph Kabila, leads a weak administration, which has effectively ceded control of much of eastern Congo to militias. The government routinely tortures political dissidents. Recently, as the nation began preparing for Presidential elections next year, Kabila tried to extend his stay in office by pushing a bill in Parliament that required a national census before the next vote—a daunting feat in a huge country with rudimentary roads. Thousands of young Congolese took to the streets for four days in January to protest. Before the bill was abandoned, security forces killed dozens of protesters and arrested others.

Musicians and artists, like most of Congo's citizens, receive little support from the country's institutions; in Kinshasa, it is impossible to get a bank loan to open a small business, let alone a cultural venue. Congolese create anyway, despite the difficulties of living in a broken state. Yoka Lye, the director of the National Institute of the Arts, told me, "Art and music in our country are another way of breathing for people—another way of resisting." The Congolese have long invented spaces in which they take refuge from the trials of their lives: exorbitant rent, overstretched public transport, no jobs, negligible social services. Many older people find their breathing room in the church. Younger ones distract themselves by taking part in sports leagues or in subcultures like *la sape*, in which men adopt dandyish clothes and aristocratic manners, parading through the streets in outlandish but immaculately tended suits.

Nathalie Bahati, who has been playing flute in Diangienda's orchestra for nineteen years, told me, "When I pick up my instrument and start playing, I

forget everything. It takes away all my difficulties." A soft-spoken single mother of two, she works as a seamstress. Other players in the orchestra are teachers, market venders, electricians, doctors, or nurses; some are students. Most originally saw the orchestra as something to do along with other church activities but came to appreciate the music on its own merits. Mananga Ndudi, a music teacher who plays the French horn, said that performing "makes me pure."

Membership in the orchestra has spread through families. In the early days, Diangienda enlisted Albert Matubanza, a science teacher and a church guitar player, to play in the orchestra and to instruct rookie musicians. Matubanza taught himself the violin, and then the bass. Looking for other players, he turned to his wife, Josephine Mpongo. "He asked me, 'Why don't you learn to play an instrument?'" she recalled. Mpongo, an animated, open woman, with her hair pulled back in a bright scrunchie, told me that she had grown up singing in the church choir. "I thought, Why not, let's give it a try," she said. She selected the cello and fell for it quickly. She quit her job as a nurse and started a business that gave her more time to refine her playing; her shop sells curtains, clothes, cosmetics, and home goods. During my visit, her family was staying at a cousin's house, having been forced to move because of an increase in the rent. But she had made sure that her son—a thirteen-year-old named Armand, after Diangienda—had strings for his violin.

When the orchestra started, instruments were scarce. Most musicians got them from abroad, by a circuitous route. When Congolese asked relatives in Europe for money, sometimes the relatives instead shipped over valuable objects that they had around the house—which might include a castoff violin or clarinet. "People had them at home, not knowing what to do with them," Matumona said. When they heard about the orchestra, they brought the instruments to sell to the new players. "It was very tough finding instruments' spare parts, so we would manufacture them on our own," Mpongo said. String players went to the National Institute of the Arts and collected discarded bows. Some musicians made

their own instruments; Matubanza, the bassist, took his bass apart to see how it was made, and then cut out patterns from paper, which he laid on sheets of wood as a guide in cutting. When the percussionists needed chimes, they tested pieces of scrap metal until they found that the wheel rims from a minibus produced a pure-sounding D natural.

Sometimes the players shared instruments, taking shifts during rehearsals. Once, Mpongo told me, an alternate violin player took a rival's bow and hid it in his shirt before a performance. When the violinist who was supposed to perform opened his case and saw that the bow was missing, he got up to look for it—and the alternate slipped into his seat, said, "Oh, I can play," and pulled the bow out of his shirt.

After six months of individual training, then another six of rehearsal, the orchestra gave its first concert, at the Palais du Peuple, the pale, columned Parliament building in downtown Kinshasa. Diangienda played the cello, which he had just learned, and Matumona played the flute, with about sixty other amateur musicians. "Several choirs were singing, and we were the surprise—no one expected us," Diangienda told me. They played church songs, a piece by Joaquín Rodrigo, Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." The audience watched with curiosity, and then with approval. "I remember, after playing the first song, the

reaction of the audience was encouraging," Diangienda told me. In the best seats, officials from Mobutu's government listened attentively; behind them sat church members and choral-music fans. "It was a great evening," he said. "People told me that this was what was missing in the church."

In the beginning, only a fifth of the audience at the concerts was black, and some Congolese complained that classical music put them to sleep. Mayimbi, the violinist, said, "They used to tell us it's not African music, it's not our culture." Mayimbi rejected that idea. What was Congolese music, anyway? Even Congo's best-known music, its effervescent version of rumba, incorporated influences from the Caribbean, Europe, and the rest of Africa.

The music that the orchestra was playing had a complex legacy in Kinshasa. Under colonialism, knowing the classics was a way to present yourself as *évolué*—of adhering to a system of behaviors that the Belgians considered "evolved." The *évolué* colonial citizen spoke perfect French, knew the right fork to use at dinner, dressed in European fashions, and refrained from dancing expressively or listening to Congolese music in public: he disguised nearly everything that made him Congolese.

After Mobutu took power, he enforced a policy of "authenticity"—a rejection of colonial values that obligated his



"Emotionally he's a child and physically he's a child."

citizens to embrace local cultures. (When Mobutu's soldiers grew angry during periods of no pay, he sent a band to play Congolese rumba for them.) Western pop was discouraged, but classical music lingered, mostly in the church. For decades, the main radio station in the country, run by the government, played classical and church songs after public figures died. When Mobutu's wife died, the station kept up a musical elegy—Beethoven, Verdi, Mozart—for days.

Serge Bango-Bango, an interpreter and an occasional musician, told me that some Kinois were initially skeptical of the orchestra: they saw it as church music, not as something you'd listen to for pleasure. Many early performances took place at churches, weddings, anniversaries, and events held by nonprofits and by foreign embassies. Diangienda called the venues concert halls, but they were really just rooms, whose acoustics weren't intended for instrumental music. The musicians held free concerts outdoors, begging dance clubs nearby to turn down their music during performances. Still, they were excited. They had taught themselves and were already teaching others. People in the audience were often astonished, less by the sound of the music than by the ambition of the orchestra: Congolese performing in a difficult, exclusive genre. "Classical orchestras have always been considered

music of a certain social class, which requires lots of training and a lot of money," Diangienda told me. "And we have proven that we could do it."

In 2008, Diangienda, Mayimbi, and the principal violist were invited for an internship at a conservatory in Evry, in the southern suburbs of Paris. They were nervous and curious; they wanted to compare themselves with French musicians, and to learn. After German filmmakers made a documentary about the orchestra, "Kinshasa Symphony," a few of the musicians went to Germany for a screening and a performance, and German musicians came to Kinshasa to give workshops. More European tours came, and they went to California, playing at a TED conference and with Peter Gabriel at a private concert in Malibu. "People are surprised because we're all black," Matumona said. "If there was one white guy as a maestro or musician, they would say, 'O.K., it's because that white guy is there—that's where it all comes from.'"

The orchestra developed a pre-tour ritual, in which the members all head to a rambling farm that Diangienda's family maintains outside Kinshasa. For a week, they eat, pray, and rehearse in an intense boot camp, sometimes taking breaks to work on construction projects and feed the livestock. In 2014, they

travelled to the U.K. to perform with several ensembles, including the BBC Concert Orchestra, in a tour of English cities. "When we went to London, they just looked at us," Mpongo recalled. The Congolese musicians settled in awkwardly next to their English counterparts. They thought that the two groups would be practicing together, but instead the English gave them a piece to play, in order to judge their abilities. "We were almost a hundred black orchestra members, and they really wanted to see what our level was," she said. "When we played, they were satisfied." During the tour, the Congolese musicians received guidance, and occasionally instruments, from their European colleagues. One of the Congolese, Johnny Balongi, told me, "As a self-taught bassoonist, I wanted to see what a professional musician could do. I was jealous of their training, because in Congo there are no other bassoonists outside of the orchestra." As they played in the commingled groups, some of them nodded and smiled, as if to say, "So *this* is how the piece should sound."

Mpongo viewed the European players' skill with equanimity. "They started very young, from childhood," she said. "Here, I wake up at four, I take the kids to school around five, I go to the boutique around six or seven, and the whole day I spend in business, and then in the evening I go to rehearsal, so my head is loaded with so many things. Abroad, they only play music from morning to evening. Of course the performances cannot be the same. But we have improved a lot."

One evening in December, the orchestra celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a concert at the Béatrice Hotel, a towering structure of glass and taupe brick near the Gare Centrale, the site of a defunct train station and a fountain commemorating Congo's independence. Inside, the musicians, dressed in black suits and dresses, set up their stands in a cavernous room with a deep-red carpet and a gaudy chandelier.

"Are you afraid?" Diangienda asked them from the podium. "Forget the audience; just pretend we're playing by ourselves, for ourselves. Don't look at the people, look at me." He becomes so anxious before their performances



"The witness will confine his 'Knock knock' answers to 'Who's there?'"

that he has nightmares about an audience waiting impatiently as the orchestra scrambles to get ready, or about going to a concert and forgetting his suit.

The players were restless. “We were wondering whether the guests were going to be there, if it would be good—it was like planning a wedding,” Mpongo, the cellist, said. Diangienda and Matumona no longer allow the orchestra to play for free; they are trying to raise money for a music school they want to build. Tickets that night were a hundred dollars, and the banquet hall was almost full, with an audience that was more black than white. People sat in rows of straight-backed red-and-gold chairs; children in church clothes squirmed in their seats.

The orchestra’s success has inspired copycat groups. The other Kimbanguist church branch now has an orchestra of its own. “They’re not as good as us, though, so it would be difficult for us to play together,” Mpongo said. These days, the orchestra often supplements its programs with compositions by Diangienda, who describes his music as “classical with an African touch.” He knows that this kind of synthesis appeals to foreign audiences; when Peter Gabriel invited the orchestra members to play, it was at least partly because of the novelty of their origins. But, Diangienda said, “I cannot compose if I don’t bring something from my own identity.” Recently, at a funeral, he heard a band from the Tetela ethnic group, and he was attracted to the percussion, a two-note *pin pin* sound. Now he was tooling around with the keyboard on his iPad, trying to integrate it into a piece. “We have a lot of variety in Congolese music,” Diangienda told me. He mimicked the songs of the Luba people, undulating phrases built on a five-note scale—like the black keys of a piano but with pitches bent to suit the emotion of a phrase. “I’m trying to find out how to bring out the particularities of our cultures within the compositions. I believe the classical composers of Western music brought the influences of their environments into the music, and I’m wondering how I can follow the same path.”

A decade ago, in the traffic circle outside the Béatrice Hotel, Congo’s culture



“The aftereffects of this near-death experience may include months to years of insufferably life-affirming pronouncements.”

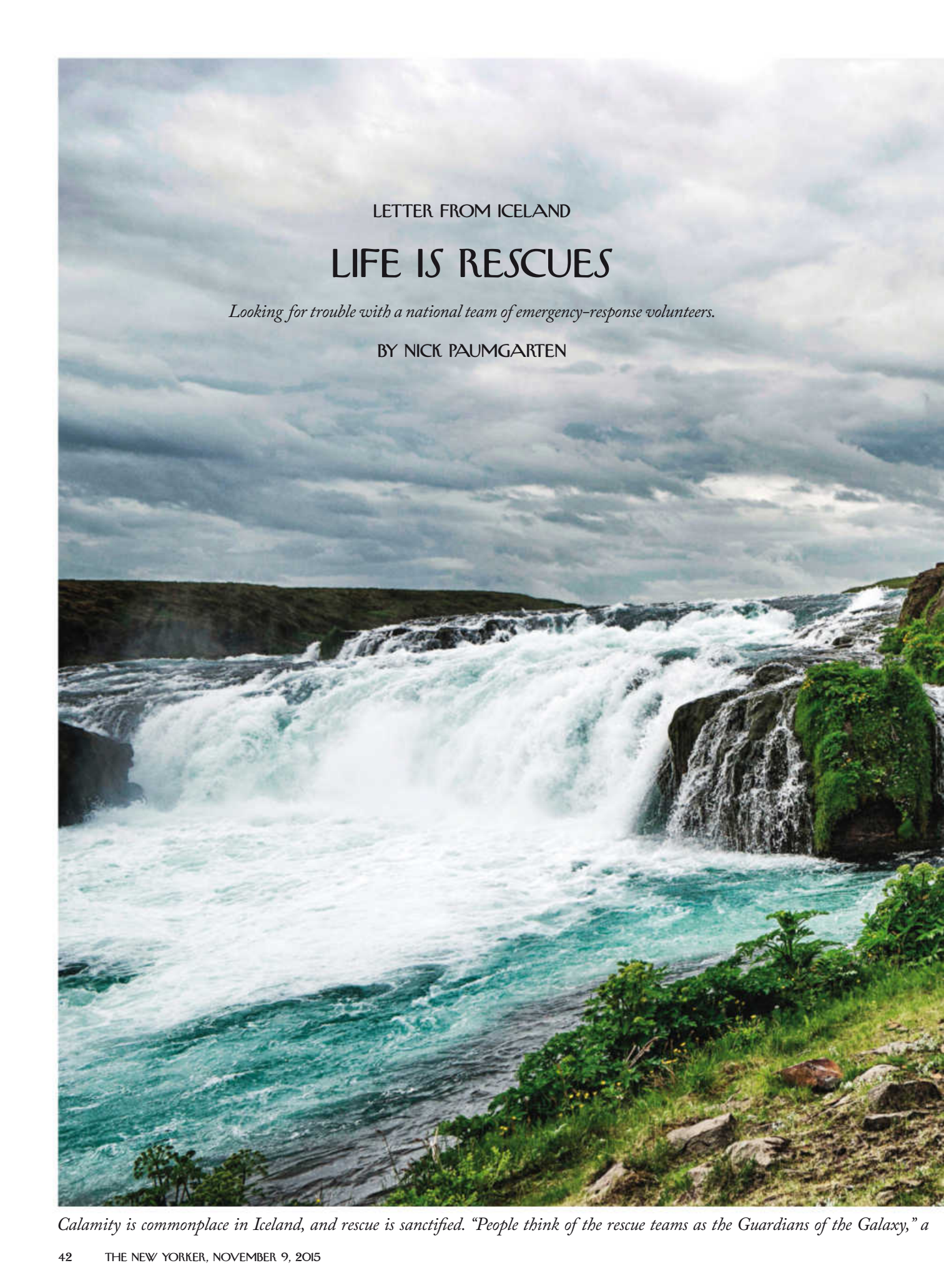
minister had erected a statue of King Leopold, suggesting that his countrymen temper their memories of the horror of the colonial era. There was an intense outcry against the celebration of a *génocidaire*, and, hours later, the government removed the statue; the minister said that it had been put up as a “trial to see if the concrete could support the weight.” Now, inside the hotel, Diangienda’s musicians saw a more natural blending of the Congolese and the European. Mayimbi, the violinist, told me, “Of course we have borrowed classical music from the Western cultures—but then what are we doing with it?” Mayimbi, who also composes for the orchestra, told me that when he listens to Beethoven he can hear a way to weave in Congolese rhythms.

The junior orchestra opened the program, and then the main group played, intently working its way through Schubert, Gounod, and Bizet. When Diangienda conducts in rehearsal, his feet lift off the floor, his knees dip and rise, and then the movement goes through his hips, ending in his hands. He sings the players’ parts aloud, snapping his fingers from side to side, swaying and clapping. During the performance, his face was serene, as he mouthed notes, sometimes slipping into a smile,

eyes watchful. After each piece, the crowd applauded enthusiastically.

When the concert was over, the audience chanted, “Encore, encore!” The musicians turned and asked their fellow-players how they felt about the performance. People approached Diangienda to give praise, and he greeted them smiling and bowing his head. “Music has become, for me, a way of communicating,” he said later. “It’s a way of expression, sharing my wishes, my ideas, with other people, and an internal strength for me to continue moving forward.”

Since 2013, half a dozen musicians have left the orchestra: some won the U.S. visa lottery; others took on time-consuming jobs or had children. Now there are eighty performing musicians and a hundred and five singers in the choir. Rehearsals are not easy; the musicians can be unfocused, because they are preoccupied with worries from their real jobs and their personal lives. But, Diangienda said, “without money, without making any false promises to people, without people understanding exactly where they are going, for them to be patient enough to be here after all these years”—he stopped, shaking his head. “And seeing what is happening—it is a great success.” ♦



LETTER FROM ICELAND

LIFE IS RESCUES

Looking for trouble with a national team of emergency-response volunteers.

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

Calamity is commonplace in Iceland, and rescue is sanctified. "People think of the rescue teams as the Guardians of the Galaxy," a



mountain guide said. "They forget these are normal people." Above: a volunteer from the Hella rescue team during a drill.

When Ásta Stefánsdóttir failed to show up for work, her family called the police. This was in Reykjavík, Iceland, last year, on a Tuesday in the nightless month of June. A few days earlier, Ásta, a thirty-five-year-old environmental lawyer, had gone with her partner, Pino Becerra Bolaños, to spend a long weekend at her grandmother's cabin in the countryside. Bolaños, a sports trainer from the Canary Islands, had missed an outdoor training class she was scheduled to teach that morning.

The police visited the cabin—they weren't home. An officer found himself ranging downhill, drawn toward a cleft in the hillside, where a torrent came out of the highlands. The area—deceptively gentle farmland in the foothills of the Tindfjalla glacier, not much more than an hour east of the capital—was called Fljótshlíð. After about ten minutes, the policeman came to a deep ravine. He scrambled to a vantage point and looked down into the gorge, where he saw, more than a hundred feet below, a body floating in a pool. It would be impossible for him to reach it from above. As Guðbrandur Örn Arnarson, Iceland's search-and-rescue project manager, told me recently, "It is a terrifying place."

Immediately, a call went out to the local search-and-rescue teams, which are part of the country's sprawling system of emergency-response volunteers, known collectively as Slysavarnafélagið Landsbjörg, or, in English, the Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue—ICE-SAR. Within hours, a dozen or so people from a number of teams had climbed up into the gorge from downstream, recovered the body, and lifted it out by helicopter. It was Bolaños. An autopsy determined, from her bruises and broken bones, that she'd died from injuries sustained in a fall of thirty or so metres. Above a waterfall of about that height, some hundred and fifty metres upstream, there was a swimming hole. The path down to the hole, descending a sheer cliff, was narrow and slippery. People had died there in the past. At the water's edge, rescuers found two pairs of shoes.

What had been a relatively straightforward accident scene now became

something more complicated: a search for a lost person. "We never just assumed that Ásta was in the ravine," Arnarson said. They had to consider that she might have wandered off in grief or panic. "And we never assume it's a crime scenario. We leave that to the police." The Landsbjörg teams adhere to databased search techniques and internationally recognized theories of

lost-person behavior. For example, they categorize by type. A hunter, a hiker, a child, a senior suffering from dementia: each tends to get lost, and to try to get found, in a particular way. The hiker usually follows trails, and so likely goes astray at decision points and then attempts to retrace. A

hunter may follow the blood trail of a wounded animal over wild terrain and, in the fervor of the pursuit, lose his bearings and then improvise. What do people do when a lover has fallen or drowned? The possible scenarios were that one woman had fallen and the other had then fallen or drowned while trying to help, or else that the survivor had scrambled free and reached out for help or done something irrational.

The SAR leaders made circles on a map, each ring denoting a probability. The outer ring traced natural boundaries, such as rivers and mountains. The searchers then divided these areas into zones and methodically searched, eliminating one after another. A net was strung across the river at the end of the gorge, and divers and rope teams worked their way up and down the ravine, in extremely difficult terrain. By the weekend, they'd found nothing.

Arnarson, the SAR project manager, convened a committee to do a review. "There was still a very remote possibility that she was alive," he said recently. "But realistically we knew this was a recovery, and a difficult one." They focussed again on the pool where they'd found the shoes—the so-called Initial Planning Point, or I.P.P. From the pool, a torrent swept through a rift in the rock and dropped thirty metres. "We suspected that Pino had gone through that. At the bottom, where the waterfall hit, there was another pool, which was completely unsearchable. Divers

went in but couldn't get close enough. Three or four metres from the waterfall, it was a total washing machine. So we'd searched everything well, except the I.P.P. If the I.P.P. is unsearchable, you have a problem. It is really hard to close a case where the I.P.P. hasn't been searched. In fact, it's unacceptable to me. So, we said, the waterfall has to go."

Turn off the water: there was some disagreement over that, although, this being Iceland, it was muted and civil. They figured they needed a few minutes to search the lower pool. The waterfall, they calculated, carried about a thousand litres per second. They concluded that it would be too difficult and damaging to the land to divert this flow into another river, via a trench. "So instead we came up with the crazy idea to siphon off the water in the pool with a pipe," Arnarson said. "It would be like stealing gasoline from a car." Searching the Internet, he had come across a farmer in Texas who had irrigated a field this way. They brought in three twelve-metre lengths of PVC pipe, an array of pumps, and, in the absence of electricity, a small armada of generators. "We were concerned about the forces we were dealing with," he said. After a couple of aborted attempts, they managed to reduce the flow by forty per cent. Swift-water rescue technicians got a quick look. "The men who went in, they said, 'That funnel—it's a beast.' We were not going to send people in there."

By then, after two weeks, four hundred and seventy-four people from fifty-nine rescue teams, using eighty-one vehicles, had been involved in the search. Most of them were volunteers, taking time away from their families and jobs. The papers followed their efforts closely. The decision to call off a search is always the hardest one to make. "We are good at identifying with the pain of people," Arnarson said. "In a smaller community, you can't hide in the masses." Nonetheless, the next day, in coordination with the police, Landsbjörg abandoned the search.

Arnarson added, "Sometimes we have to evaluate risk versus return. Very rarely do we make decisions unsupported by data. Sometimes we determine that there is no chance that the person is still alive. It can sound callous. In the end, once we know it's a recovery, we



do it for the living, for the families left behind." Another rescuer told me, "It's harder to stop a search than to start one."

A month later, during a routine twice-weekly hike down into the gorge, a member of the SAR team from the nearby town of Hella found Ásta's body. She was well downstream of the waterfall but above the net. The autopsy determined that she'd died of hypothermia.

Iceland, with a population of little more than three hundred thousand, is the only NATO country with no standing Army. It has police, and a coast guard, but these, like the citizens they are paid to protect, are spread thin, so come accident or disaster, disappearance or storm, the citizens, for the most part, have always had to fend for themselves. Landsbjörg has evolved into a regimented volunteer system that serves as a peerless kind of national-emergency militia. It is not a government program, and so represents a tithing of manpower. There are close to ten thousand members in all, with four thousand of them on "callout" duty, on ninety-seven teams. Pretty much every town has a team. (Reykjavík and its surrounding municipalities, where more than two out of three Icelanders live, have eight.) They are well trained and well equipped, self-funded and self-organizing, and enjoy a near-mythical reputation among their countrymen, who, though often agnostic regarding the existence of elves and gnomes, are generally not inclined toward reverence or exaggeration. "People think of the rescue teams as the Guardians of the Galaxy," a mountain guide told me. "They forget these are normal people."

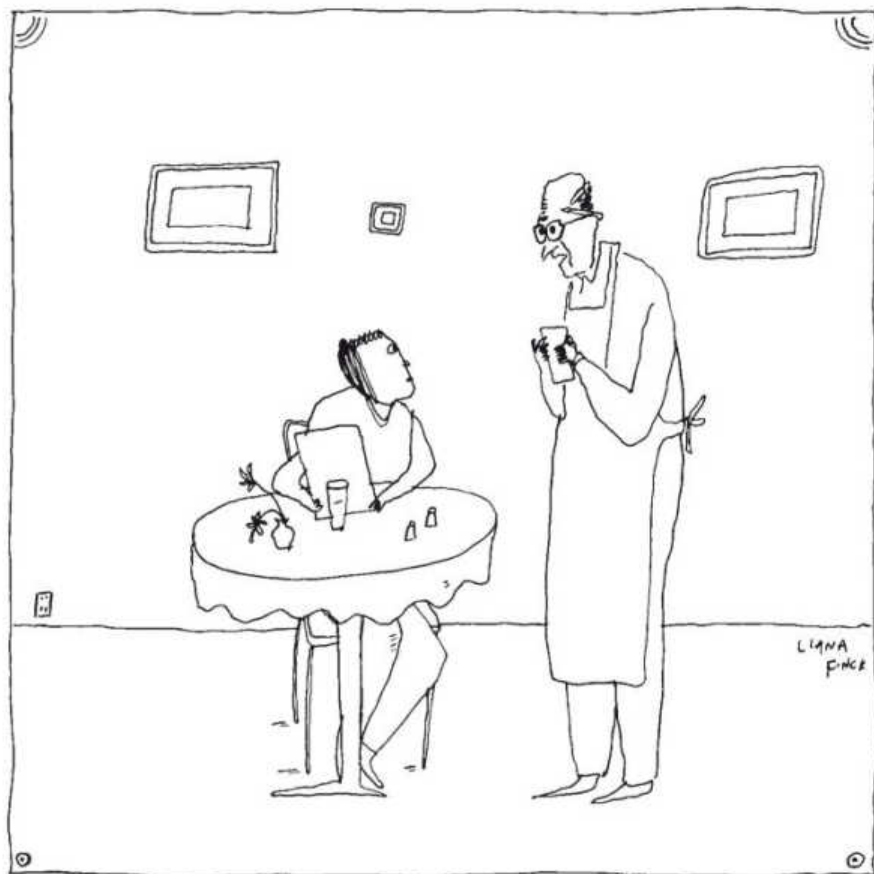
Were Iceland, say, Rhode Island, a system like Landsbjörg would be nice enough—grownup Boy and Girl Scouts to help firemen get cats down from trees—but Iceland, besides being sparsely populated, is marooned far out on the polar edge of the North Atlantic, just below the Arctic Circle. It has harsh, unpredictable weather and a raw, inhospitable landscape. Since it was first settled, more than eleven hundred years ago, by Norse chieftains, its inhabitants have waged a perpetual war with the elements. There are volcanoes, crevasses, avalanches, earthquakes, tidal waves, ocean gales, sandstorms, and glacial-lake

outburst floods, to say nothing of winters without daylight and varieties of precipitation and wind uncommon to the temperate zones. It is hard for a visitor to appreciate how quickly conditions can change, and how dismal they can get. One might sometimes hear an Icelander describe a blizzard in terms of snow driving up from the ground. Calamity is almost commonplace, and so rescue, its counterpart, is ingrained and sanctified.

The guide told me, "If you're a dude who wants to come here and do your bucket list and put your picture up on Facebook, you'll go home in a black bag. I've seen tough guys, real tough guys, crying out there, wet and cold, their tents exploding in the wind."

There are teams in the towns, and then overarching teams pulling together the best members in their respective disciplines: ocean rescue, mountaineering, glacial travel, avalanche search, parachuting. Nurses, hunters, mechanics. The teams have a fetish for vehicles; each

seems to have a shiny souped-up fleet. In many cases, it's the supercharged trucks with the floodlights and monster tires ("We just call them cars," a rescuer named Eiríkur F. Sigursteinsson told me), or the Ski-Doos and Zodiacs, that lure young people to volunteer. They undergo eighteen to twenty-four months of basic training and then do further work in whatever discipline is to become theirs. As with any human endeavor, there are hierarchies and assertions of status. "The mountaineers think they're the center of the universe," one rescuer said. One of those mountaineers smiled when I told him this and said that when he or his cohort get into trouble they just call each other for help, rather than SAR. "Otherwise, you get a hundred people showing up, with all of their cars and trucks." Everyone is proud of Landsbjörg's urban search-and-rescue unit, which assists in natural disasters abroad. At the headquarters of the Kópavogur team, the unit keeps a souped-up shipping container ready for deployment



"The soup of the day is mushroom-barley, but I'd rather talk about the soup of November 6, 1946."

overseas. They say they were the first foreign rescue team to arrive in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake there.

In the absence of government support, the rescue teams get most of their funding from the sale of fireworks. In Iceland, setting off fireworks is legal just one week a year—around New Year's Eve—and on those dark days Reykjavík turns into a subarctic Tet, a festival of detonation and smoke. Last year, Ice-

neyðarkall. *Neyðar* means “emergency,” and *kall* can mean either “call” or “man”—a convenient pun. Icelanders collect them, for the sake of the cause. Landsbjörg also operates slot machines.

Landsbjörg traces its roots back to the formation, in 1918, of a rescue team in the Westman Islands, an archipelago just off the southern coast. The women on shore banded together and

cages and an American woman's corpse in a coffin), lost its bearings and disappeared. For three days, there was no sign of it. The local papers printed the crew members' obituaries. On the fourth day, a coast-guard vessel off the northeastern coast picked up a distress call: “Location unknown—all alive.” The plane, it turned out, had crashed into the Vatnajökull, the biggest glacier in Iceland, and the crew,



Elvar, a banker, swims through snowmelt in the mountains of Landmannalaugar to rescue a family of tourists.

landers blew up five hundred tons of fireworks. Most of the public's arsenal comes from Landsbjörg, which coordinates their manufacture in China and then imports them throughout the year. Each team manages its own inventory and sells from its own stalls and storefronts. The Kópavogur team has seven fireworks stores and last year bartered a pallet of fireworks for a tractor. Landsbjörg is in some respects just a fireworks mafia, to the same extent that the Girl Scouts is a network for the distribution of Thin Mints. The remainder of Landsbjörg's funds comes from donations and from the sale, every November, of little painted-plastic key-chain icons called

organized a rescue crew to curtail the loss of their men at sea, and in time other fishing communities established similar groups and protocols. Eventually, the fishing industry, as it grew, supported these efforts with donations. On land, farmers, left to their own devices, looked after each other, as they will.

The galvanizing event, countrywide, was the so-called Geysir crash, in September, 1950. During a nighttime snowstorm, the Geysir, a Loftleiðir DC-4 Skymaster, en route to Reykjavík from Luxembourg with a crew of six Icelanders (but no passengers, except for eighteen dogs in wicker

after enduring a blizzard, had found a transmitter in a life raft that was pinned beneath the fuselage. Reykjavík rejoiced. The American military, which had an air base nearby, sent a rescue ski-plane, but after it located the Geysir and landed on the glacier it got snowed in and couldn't take off, so now its crew, too, was stranded.

There was little choice but to fetch them on foot. A group of vacationers from Reykjavík, who were touring the highlands in four-wheel-drive jeeps, hooked up with members of a local alpine club, and together these two dozen civilians staged an epic rescue attempt. Amid warnings over the radio that

they not loot the wreckage, they four-wheeled to the base of a mountain, climbed over the top of it and down onto the skirt of the glacier, and, with primitive gear and almost nothing in the way of supplies, skied almost twenty miles across the ice to the crash site. (Vatnajökull is more than twice the size of Rhode Island.) Then they hauled out all ten survivors, during an overnight retreat in darkness and sub-zero fog. Of the dozen dogs that had lived through the crash and its aftermath, the rescuers shot all but one, to spare the dogs from freezing or starving to death. Another crew returned a couple of weeks later to get the coffin, the cargo, and the only dog they'd spared, an Alsatian named Carlo, who had run back to the plane when the first rescuers had tried to take him with them.

The idea of rescue seems as essential to the national mythology, in its way, as sagas and trolls. The Reykjavík journalist Óttar Sveinsson has written twenty-two books about Icelandic rescues, one per year since 1994, with "Útkall"—in English, "callout"—as the first word in the title of each. All the Útkall books have been best-sellers in Iceland. The one about the Geysir—"Útkall: Geysir er Horfinn," published in 2002—has sold better than any of them. (Sveinsson has had it translated into English—"Ingigerður stretched her arms out as far as she could. In the gale Magnús found her chilled hands, and held on"—but has yet to find a publisher.) Landsbjörg has figured in many of his books and was the centerpiece of his 2013 one, about a fleet of giant-tire jeeps that got stranded on a glacier. A woman and her nine-year-old son got out of one of the jeeps and fell into a crevasse, hand in hand. Where the ice narrowed, some hundred feet down, the mother died on impact, but the boy was alive, clinging to her arm to keep from slipping deeper. The rescuers had to be lowered head first to get to him.

"The rescue squads are very close to the heart of the nation," Sveinsson said. "We have come to believe it is a normal thing, to have this in our lives. In some ways, we are spoiled inhabitants."

Iceland's version of dialling 911 is

calling 112, and people abuse the 112 system much as Americans abuse 911, even though the 112 responders are civilians, with families and day jobs. Rescuers will tell you tales of Reykjavickers lazily calling on them for silly mishaps—one team leader remembered being summoned by a resident to pick up a garbage can that had blown over in the wind. "And he wasn't eighty," she said.

"Rescue teams have become the answer for everything," a guide named Védís Ólafsdóttir said. "Are Icelanders too comfortable with it?"

But if anyone is spoiled it's the tourists. A system designed for communal self-preservation has become an underfunded and underappreciated national concierge service for visitors from abroad. The number of tourists in Iceland has tripled in the past fifteen years. There will be more than a million visitors this year, many of them drawn by Iceland's reputation (which the country markets abroad, too) as a place for easy access to adventure and raw beauty. They tend to overrate the easy and under-rate the raw. They get themselves into all kinds of trouble.

"The system of the police, the state, and the tourist industry doesn't have the capacity," Kristján Maack, the leader of the team from Kópavogur, told me. "We are a nation of three hundred thousand trying to have the things that nations of millions of people have."

Some have proposed that those who are rescued should pay a fee, or that visitors from abroad should pay a rescue tax. "People are fed up with tourists getting stuck in rental cars," Hörður Míó Ólafsson, an adventure guide, said. "There's talk of stopping catering to the hippies who come here with their tents." There has been a surge in reports of tourist stupidity and disrespect, such as the one this summer of a woman and her children defecating on the street in broad daylight in a town along the southern coast. Icelanders like to cite the instance of a tourist who'd gone missing from her tour group. SAR teams mobilized, and the tour group joined the search. After several hours, someone realized that the missing woman had, in fact, merely changed her clothes, and when she got back on the tour bus no one had realized who she was. She,

too, had got caught up in the search. Now this story is known as the Woman Who Searched for Herself.

Last winter was Iceland's stormiest in decades. Spring came late and stayed cool. Tourists arriving in mid-June, the beginning of the high season, found many parts of the highlands still closed, the roads impassable, owing to the snow-pack. The hut at Landmannalaugar, a popular trekking base in the southern highlands—Iceland's Yellowstone, sort of—didn't open until the end of the month. Every summer, as part of a Landsbjörg initiative called Safe Travel, rescue teams encamp there for a week at a time to patrol the area and be on hand for the inevitable mishaps. The first shift started in July and belonged to the team from Garðabær, a town adjoining Reykjavík. I got to tag along.

I arrived in Iceland to the talk that, the previous night, seismographs had recorded a hundred earthquakes just offshore, and to the sight, at baggage claim, of a few members of the band Mudhoney as well as the hip-hop eminence Flavor Flav. They were due to perform at a festival on the old NATO base in Keflavík. Iceland has more music festivals than it does rescue helicopters. In spite of (or maybe because of) its remoteness, it has become known as an outpost of the techno-artistic avant-garde: Ólafur Eliásson, Julian Assange, the Bedroom Community, Björk. This Iceland doesn't overlap much with the Landsbjörger's island of top-roping seminars and monster trucks. The news among the rescuers I met my first day was of two ill-equipped Czech climbers who'd got stuck on a cliff the previous night while descending Mt. Esja, near the capital. To spend time in the company of a rescue crew is to see the country as a grid of horrible accidents and comical false alarms. Life is rescues.

The Garðabær crew mustered the following afternoon at their headquarters, a garage and warehouse space next to a primary school on the outskirts of Reykjavík. The team has around sixty active members. Ten were heading out on the highlands watch. The team leader was Guðrun Katrin Johannsdóttir, a thirty-nine-year-old product manager at a company that sells animal feed, who

joined up six years ago because, among other reasons, she'd bought a rescue dog and wanted to put him to work. She had on her red Landsbjörg jacket, with an icon (an old *neyðarkall*) on her zipper of a searcher with a dog. While another veteran of the team, a phone-company technician named Palli Viggósson, went through boxes of food, Katrin did the familiar show-and-tell that I came to think of as the Presentation of the Vehicles. Garðabær had four snowmobiles, a Sno-Cat, two modified red Toyota four-door trucks with forty-four-inch spiked tires, and two vans. They were packing provisions into one of the trucks and a van, which had a trailer attached.

"Palli and I are in charge of the cars," Katrin said. "I think I might be the only woman in Iceland in charge of the cars."

There were ten people on this watch. Besides Katrin and Palli, they were Magga, Maggý, Elvar, Elva, Einar, Einar, Rebekka, and Halli. Rebekka and Magga are sisters. Elva and one of the Einars are a couple, as are Magga and Elvar. (In Iceland, people generally go by their first names. Surnames are typically just patronymics: the father's first name with "son" or "dóttir" attached.) It wasn't easy to keep them all straight, but it beat trying to figure out where we were going. Icelanders' pronunciation of place-names is confounding even when you have the words spelled out on paper.

The youngest was twenty-three: Halli, a gentle bear of a man with a big Brooklyn beard, who'd joined up because of the cars. He didn't talk much. I think the first thing I heard him say, in English anyway, was "Cold is a state of mind." Elvar, forty-two, a banker, arrived in a suit. One of the Einars inspected bins of probes, shovels, ice axes, helmets, and avalanche transceivers. The members of the team provide their own gear. Rebekka sorted through the food supply—all of it donated, mostly by Icelandic companies. Employers support Landsbjörg mainly by allowing their employees to go out on rescues or training missions without docking their pay, but they also sometimes kick in for food. It's like jury duty with a free carton of eggs.

Rebekka called shotgun. The convoy hit the highway, passing big-box

BITCH

This Weimaraner in spandex,
tight on the deep chest,
webbed at the tiny waist.

The drips and drabs of her dug:
ten, a tapering wedge,
narrowed toward the back legs.

She gives me her paw,
a branch with buds, four
spare pads and claws.

Her tail's unstoppable verve
and swerve,
the long hard curve

of a skipping rope.
Metronomic, rapid,
slow, three-speed raps.

stores and meadows of purple lupine. Within minutes, it pulled into a gas station, where members of another Landsbjörg team were loitering on the grass, and warning approaching motorists against the country's dangers. The Garðabær crew got out and mingled. Elva went inside for gum, and when it was time to go, Einar, unable to find her, drove the van in circles around the station lot. The week's first search: they found her after a few laps.

A while later, as the road cut through foothills of steaming fumaroles, the team came upon a three-car fender bender. They all got out, but no drivers or passengers were hurt, and the police were supposedly on their way. Onward. The next stop, not much farther east, was a KFC in the town of Selfoss, home to the team handballer Þórir Ólafsson and the grave of Bobby Fischer. Afterward, having forgotten to get gas, they had to backtrack a few miles, to a station that provides Landsbjörg vehicles with discount fuel. Now they got caught in traffic heading back through Selfoss. One began to get a sense that this wasn't SEAL Team 6.

Elvar handed around a bag of strange salty licorice candies called Dracula Mega, and gestured to the broad river that passes through Selfoss. Last spring, a car had driven into it. A search for

the driver ensued: divers, Zodiacs, police. They found him the next day, well downstream, sitting on a front loader, dazed and hypothermic. Someone suggested he might have driven the car into the water on purpose. Insurance scam? Suicide? "The rescue teams speculate a lot, but that doesn't go into the media," Katrin said. "We search a lot for people we know were going out to kill themselves." Iceland does not have a notably high suicide rate. It ranks thirty-fifth among nations, between Belgium and Angola. "You have to get into the mind-set of the person you are looking for, and this can be tough. We are the only team with a contract with psychiatrists."

It took about four hours to reach Landmannalaugar. The road skirted west and north of Hekla, a volcano that last erupted in 2000 and that a thousand years ago was known in Europe as the Gateway to Hell. "It's due," Katrin said. The last hour was unpaved and rough, through a moonscape of lava and pumicite, leading toward the mountains. Landmannalaugar sits at a bend in the river coming out of the highlands, in a broad gravel basin braided in spring by snowmelt. It's hemmed in by peaks composed of a volcanic rock called rhyolite, which takes on an array of colors: orange, gray,

Each ear an evening dress
cut on the bias.
The golden eyes pious

(praying for food).
She poos
like a kangaroo.

Hunger: her muzzle's
cribbage board a drizzle
of glycerin spittle.

She sleeps as if
she were a penknife,
legs half-folded away. Twitched off.

And eats like a washing machine.
The lavish eight-inches-long
shoe-shop-shoehorn tongue.

—Craig Raine

green, and black. This spectral display was, uncharacteristically for July, more than half obscured by snow, which made up for the affront by reflecting the reds and pinks of the Arctic high summer's seemingly endless twilight. Between sunset and sunrise, the alpenglow spans midnight and lasts for hours.

Just above Landmannalaugar, a lava flow tumbles down toward the camp, a tangle of volcanic rock that some of the rescuers call Mordor, after Tolkien's blackened wasteland. In the fall of 2013, the Garðabær team spent weeks searching Mordor for a missing American hiker who'd gone out alone on a trek. He wasn't found until the following spring.

To reach Landmannalaugar, you either park and cross the river on a crude footbridge or, if you have the right car, you ford it. When we got to the bank, the water was a couple of feet deep and running hard. I'd heard it said, Wade across first, and if you drown don't attempt to drive it. Two buses had got stuck the previous week and had to be towed clear, but the Toyota and the van, with their giant tires, plowed through to the far bank, wheels spitting. Landmannalaugar consisted of two huts—one for hikers, the other for the rangers—and a basic struc-

ture with bathrooms, showers, and barbecue grills. Bright-colored campers' tents—say, a hundred—dotted the basin, like so many tulips. At the far edge of the settlement was a pair of old army-green school buses, which had been converted into a makeshift store called the Mountain Mall. Next to them was the Landsbjörg hut, a wooden box of two hundred and fifty square feet, with four bunks, a kitchenette, a card table, and scant remaining floor space. Ten was a tight fit. The crew spent the next several hours unloading supplies, setting up the kitchen tent, and getting the cabin ready. It never got dark.

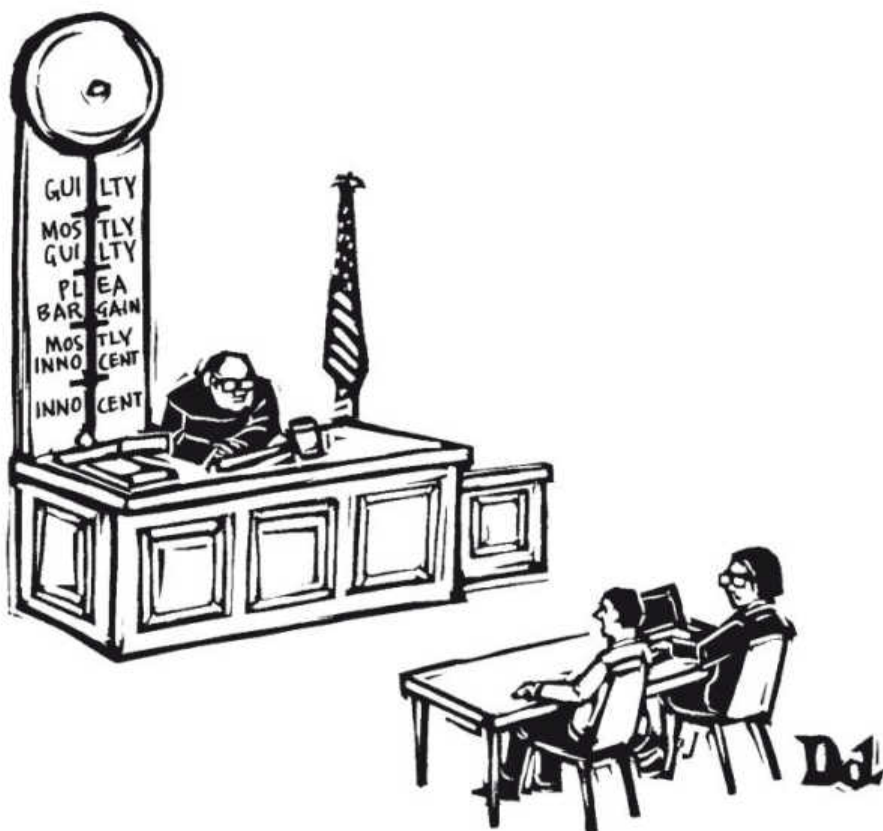
This was one end of the most popular trek in Iceland, a four-day hut-to-hut walk called the Laugavegur. It passes through rough country routinely beset by foul weather. Even experienced hikers frequently get into deep trouble. "Actually, it's amazing, judging from the number of them, that we don't have to rescue more," Katrin said. Everyone had stories. One of her favorites was a story I came to know as the Saga of Hot Pants. A few years ago, three college-age kids from Holland showed up at Landmannalaugar to make the thirty-three-mile trek to Þórsörk. The two men were wearing jeans. The woman was wearing hot pants. It was a few degrees

above freezing and starting to snow. The SAR volunteers and the hut warden tried to talk them out of setting forth, or at least "to put on real pants," Katrin said. (Instead, the woman put on pantyhose under the hot pants.) Hours into the hike, the Dutch group stopped at a pass with a memorial to an Israeli tourist who had died here of hypothermia in 2004. The snow was coming down hard. One of the guys had a ukulele. "The Dutch hikers just gave up there," Katrin said. "They just lay down. They thought they were dying. They were just two hundred metres away from a spot where they would have seen the hut, but they had a full-on breakdown. Being stuck is a state of mind." A warden brought them to the hut, and the team fetched them several hours later. "The next day, they got on the bus. They tried to ditch without paying for the hut. If you do that in Iceland, people will know. It is a small country. No one will help you anywhere."

In the morning, Rebekka summoned everyone to the kitchen tent: "*Beikon! Beikon!*" The rescue team huddled around a propane wok, chattering and laughing in Icelandic. Palli was the worst snorer, they all agreed. On a pair of folding picnic tables they'd set out cans of Heinz beans and juice boxes, and they drank coffee out of clear plastic cups, on which each team member wrote his name with an indelible marker. The team passed around a box of *kleinur*—Icelandic doughnuts—and spread butter on slices of white bread. There were scrambled eggs and *beikon*, donated by Nýherji, the I.T. company Elva worked for. Day One of highland watch is the high life.

All of them spoke excellent English. Though they'd studied it a bit in school, they said they had learned it mainly from television. Over eggs, they called out the names of shows: "Little House on the Prairie." "Friends." "Dallas." "Beverly Hills, 90210." Palli, the eldest at forty-five, recalled that there used to be just one channel, and no TV on Thursdays, and none at all in July and August.

At eleven, the crew headed out on patrol. Their territory covers hundreds of square miles, but most of it was still largely inaccessible owing to snow on the roads. Halli and Katrin took the



"You're lucky it's one of those late-day trials where he'll be fatigued."

truck. Halli roared along a dirt track, hammering potholes and bumps and skidding through turns. The road took them into Dómadalur—Judgment Valley—a vast stretch of volcanic sand, with a brush of vegetation catching the light. This was a landscape of car commercials and movies about earthlings on semi-habitable planets. Lakes, craters, river crossings. "There's nothing on earth more beautiful than this area," Katrin said. Off-roading was strictly forbidden. "Because of the vegetation and the soil," she said. In places, the volcanic sand had a faint fuzz of green. She clucked whenever she saw a tire track even a few feet off the road. A task of the highland watch is to report violators to the police. In one spot, near a lake, the road was blocked by a drift of rotten snow. The Toyota, on giant tires and in low gear, toddled through, but other drivers had gone off road and left a mess of tracks in the mud. To Katrin, this was like coming across an elephant shot by poachers: "This is awful. Awful."

Five hours passed. They crisscrossed

the countryside. Occasionally, Katrin and Halli encountered the others, who were in the van doing the same thing, and teamed up to check out some notable spot: a cave, a crater. To everyone's disappointment, there were no stranded motorists or emergency calls of any kind—not even a flat tire. It was, of course, indecent to hope for misfortune, but the SAR crew was eager to see some action—to test their skills, their training, and their tools, and to scratch the altruistic itch. Almost everyone who signs on for Landsbjörg seems to carry whatever gene it is that compels people to want to help others, but I saw no trace of the hero syndrome, the one that leads people to create emergencies in order to resolve them.

Three years ago, a September snowstorm in the northeast buried thousands of grazing sheep. Rescue teams spread out in snowmobiles, scouring the horizon for humps in the snow. They deployed avalanche probes (long stakes, like tent poles). As the snow melted, flocks of heads poked out of

the drifts. "If you found a ewe, you'd probe for the lambs," Katrin said. These were the spring lambs, which were ready for slaughter. It was a little strange to put out so extraordinary an effort to save animals that would soon be killed, but the farmers faced an economic catastrophe. From a cost-benefit perspective, the operation was hard to evaluate, but that's math that Landsbjörg doesn't care to do. "We do the work," Katrin said. "It costs a lot, but we still do it."

Generally, it seems, the rescuers enjoy what they do. "The most fun are the callouts in the storms," Katrin said. "There's snow and you're shovelling like crazy. You get a lot of action for the cars. But most of the time it's nothing. Someone is missing for six hours and then suddenly he turns up, or you spend two hours climbing a mountain to reach someone stranded there and then a helicopter picks him up, under your nose."

Landsbjörg is in some ways the most mundane thing about Iceland and yet also a kind of secular religion. Kristján Maack, the head of the Kópavogur team, a photographer who also guides tourists into a caldera, told me, "The winters are long and dark, and there isn't much to do. We have declining church participation, so people do this instead. Sing together, play cards."

The goad, for Maack's generation, was a series of devastating avalanches in the Westfjords in 1995. Massive snow slides buried the villages of Súðavík and Flateyri. Six hundred rescuers worked the debris. In the end, they recovered thirty-six corpses and twenty survivors, among them an eleven-year-old girl who had been buried for eleven hours. Many SAR volunteers didn't return to the job after that. It was too much. But many young citizens, following the tragedy on TV, admired the effort and years later found themselves bumping around the hinterlands in red Toyotas, looking for someone to save.

The twilight that night lingered well past midnight, the sky afire with the reflected light of the sun just below the horizon. The air was still and near freezing. A hard rain came at 5 A.M., followed by a cold, blustery fog that seemed to cut through Gore-Tex and

wool. The camp stirred late. The dismal weather brought hope to the team:

"Now the fog—we're getting excited."

"And a bus just brought in fifty-six schoolkids from the U.K., so maybe something happens."

Einar got to work screwing an antenna to the roof of the hut. He was perched on the top rung of a ladder while the others stood around giving directions. How many Landsbjörgers does it take to screw in a light bulb? "Eight," Palli said. "One to screw in the light bulb and seven to stand around hoping he falls so they have something to do." Einar, on tiptoe, reached up blindly. Palli said, "The ladder is wobbly, so there is always hope."

The afternoon brought more driving, this time up to the so-called fishing lakes, an hour north: Halli and Palli barreling through a rolling desert of black sand, which, when covered in snow, is an off-roader's paradise. In the evening, the team loaded up again and tore off. They came upon a car with a flat, another with a family nervous about fording a river. The team decided to help both parties across. Halli and Palli, in the red Toyota, led the way through the current. The car with the spare, a Nissan sedan with a Swiss family aboard, followed. Halfway across, it got stuck. You could see, through the window, that the wife and the daughter were yelling at the husband, and the husband was wearing his incompetence in the way husbands often do: trying to pass off mortification as cool. He'd failed to put the car into four-wheel-drive. Halli and Palli guided him out, as the rest of the team stood on the bank and took photographs. The other car turned around and headed back down the road, out of the highlands.

"You're no virgin anymore," Palli said to Halli: his first rescue call.

On the third evening of highlands watch, Magga, Elva, Katrin, Rebekka, and Einar sat in their cabin, playing a card game called *skitakall*, which they said meant "shitty man." The rules, to say nothing of the banter, were indecipherable. I wandered out into the rain and then into the kitchen tent. On a row of plastic hangers someone had hung the team's bananas. Each hanger held two bunches. I stood looking at

this, in admiration and wonder. Iceland.

Suddenly, there was commotion outside the tent. "We have a mission!" a voice called out. The team members were rushing around, gathering their things and giving high fives. "A car is stuck in the river!" I thought of the old TV show "Emergency!" and the way Squad 51's banal fire-station goings on were always interrupted by alarms and bursts of activity.

Katrin took the red truck, with Elva riding shotgun. The rest followed in the van. The drive was just a couple of hundred yards. The truck plowed into the river. There in the middle of it was a rented black Kia Sorento wagon, tilted upstream, listing a little into the current. A GoPro was mounted on the hood. And on the roof was a woman in an Adidas sweatsuit, curled up in such a way as to keep every part of her body as far from the water as possible. The truck pulled alongside. She was yelling, "My documents! My documents! Just help us! Please."

Katrin tried to get her to calm down. There were four people in all: husband at the wheel, wife in the front passenger seat, young man in back. The woman on top of the car was apparently the young man's wife—the daughter-in-law. Her husband was trying to coax her into the car, but she was clinging to a handbag and shouting. The river, swift and gray in the gloaming, lapped at the wheel wells. The headlights, at water level, cast an eerie light. A small crowd had gathered on each shore. "Turn off the car!" Katrin told the man at the wheel. The engine was dragging water in. He was half smiling—mortification masquerading as intention, or else suppressed mirth at the mess he'd got into and the panic it had set off.

The family was Lebanese. They had been planning an Iceland trip for five years. The woman on the roof had handled the logistics. This was their second night in Iceland. They were staying in a hotel in Hella, near the coast, but had unaccountably driven into the highlands at night to have a look. They'd had no intention even of staying in the campground, so there'd been no reason to try to ford the river. But they'd fol-

lowed a bus through, and when the bus slowed so had the Kia, and then it was stuck. In a panic, the mother had tried opening her door, which was on the upstream side. The river poured in and sucked the upstream side down. The daughter-in-law had scrambled atop the car, fearing for her documents.

Now she was starting to grab for the truck. Being stuck is a state of mind. The woman reluctantly passed her handbag to Katrin, and then suddenly was coming through the Toyota's rear window. On the shore, Einar and Elvar were donning their dry suits, life vests, and helmets.

Katrin backed the truck up. Einar and Elvar, in the river now, tried to attach a line to the rear of the car to pull it out. Elvar, fully submerged alongside the rear bumper, couldn't find a hook. He rigged the line around the rear wheel instead. They were improvising, whistling and calling out to each other and making hand signals that nobody could read. The Lebanese driver was turning the wheel the wrong way, the usual dad mistake.

Katrin's first two attempts to drag out the Kia failed. The angle was wrong. She turned the Toyota around, and they let out a winch, which was attached to the front of the truck. Elvar had found a hook. They hitched up the Kia and reeled it in, like a salmon. Water came pouring out, followed by the three soaked Lebanese.

The crew ministered to them, giving them blankets and food, transferring their luggage to the van. The Kia wouldn't start, so the team pushed it off to the side and called in a tow truck. The electrical system was toast, but they refrained from mentioning this fact, or that the engine might be ruined, too, and that this would probably cost the family upward of ten thousand dollars. The family had been through enough. The team made them some space in the hut. It was nearly midnight by the time the gang got back to their card game. ♦



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Images from a tour of duty with the volunteer search-and-rescue team.

BLOOD TIES

Two brilliant college lovers were convicted of a brutal slaying. All these years later, why has the case become a cause?

BY NATHAN HELLER

The door was locked but the light outside was burning bright, and when the three women arrived for bridge with Mr. Haysom they were puzzled to find no one answering the bell. The cars were in the driveway. Though it was daytime, the porch lamp by the door had been left on. It was April 3, 1985, and the neighborhood was quiet. The women called Annie Massie, a friend who had a spare key, in case something had befallen their bridge partner or his wife.

Holcomb Rock Road, where Derek and Nancy Haysom lived, snaked through central Virginia and into the hilly deep woods around Lynchburg. Derek, seventy-two, was a South African engineer. He had met Nancy, an American, known as Cita, in Johannesburg when they were both divorced. They'd joined their families, and, in 1964, they had their only child together, Elizabeth, raised in Nova Scotia, where Derek ran a steel mill. The house on Holcomb Rock Road, which they'd bought a few years earlier for retirement, was modest, but it had a tennis court, a swimming pool, and a view of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Nancy dubbed the place Loose Chippings, after a British phrase for scattered gravel on the road.

When Massie entered the house, she found the Haysoms sprawled on the ground, caked in gore. Derek Haysom was on his side near a doorway, an arm stretched out before him. Nancy Haysom was in the kitchen, traced in crimson whirls, as if someone had wiped the blood around her like Windex on glass. Both bodies were ragged with stab wounds, and their necks had been cut nearly from ear to ear.

Officers soon swarmed the scene. Loose Chippings had a Lynchburg mailing address but sat in Bedford County, outside town. Though the crimes were in the jurisdiction of the county sheriff's office, a task force from

central Virginia joined the case. Chuck Reid and Ricky Gardner, investigators from Bedford, set out to discover what the neighbors knew. Gardner, then twenty-nine, had never worked a homicide before.

The house revealed no indication of forced entry. On the dining-room table were place settings and the remnants of a meal. No weapon could be found, but there were footprints in the blood. One looked to have been made by a tennis shoe, and two more by a sock. Forensic study showed that the Haysoms had blood-alcohol levels of .22—exceedingly high. A vodka bottle nearby carried fingerprints, as did a shot glass. Four blood types were in evidence: the Haysoms' A and AB, a bit of B blood on a damp rag, and, on the screen door and in the master suite, spots of O.

DNA analysis was largely unavailable in 1985, but, from these samples, it was possible to reconstruct a sequence of events. At some point between March 29th and 31st, the killer or killers had arrived at Loose Chippings, probably during a meal. Someone, it seemed, had sat down at the table with the Haysoms to eat. A trail of blood suggested that Derek Haysom was attacked there, and stumbled across the dining room as he bled. A bloody palm print on a side chair showed where he'd put a hand down, as if struggling to stay upright; his killer had pursued him. Derek Haysom's jugular and carotid were cut, and he had been stabbed thirty-six times. Then the murderer, with great presence of mind, seemed to have got up, wiped down much of the scene, and washed up in the bathroom.

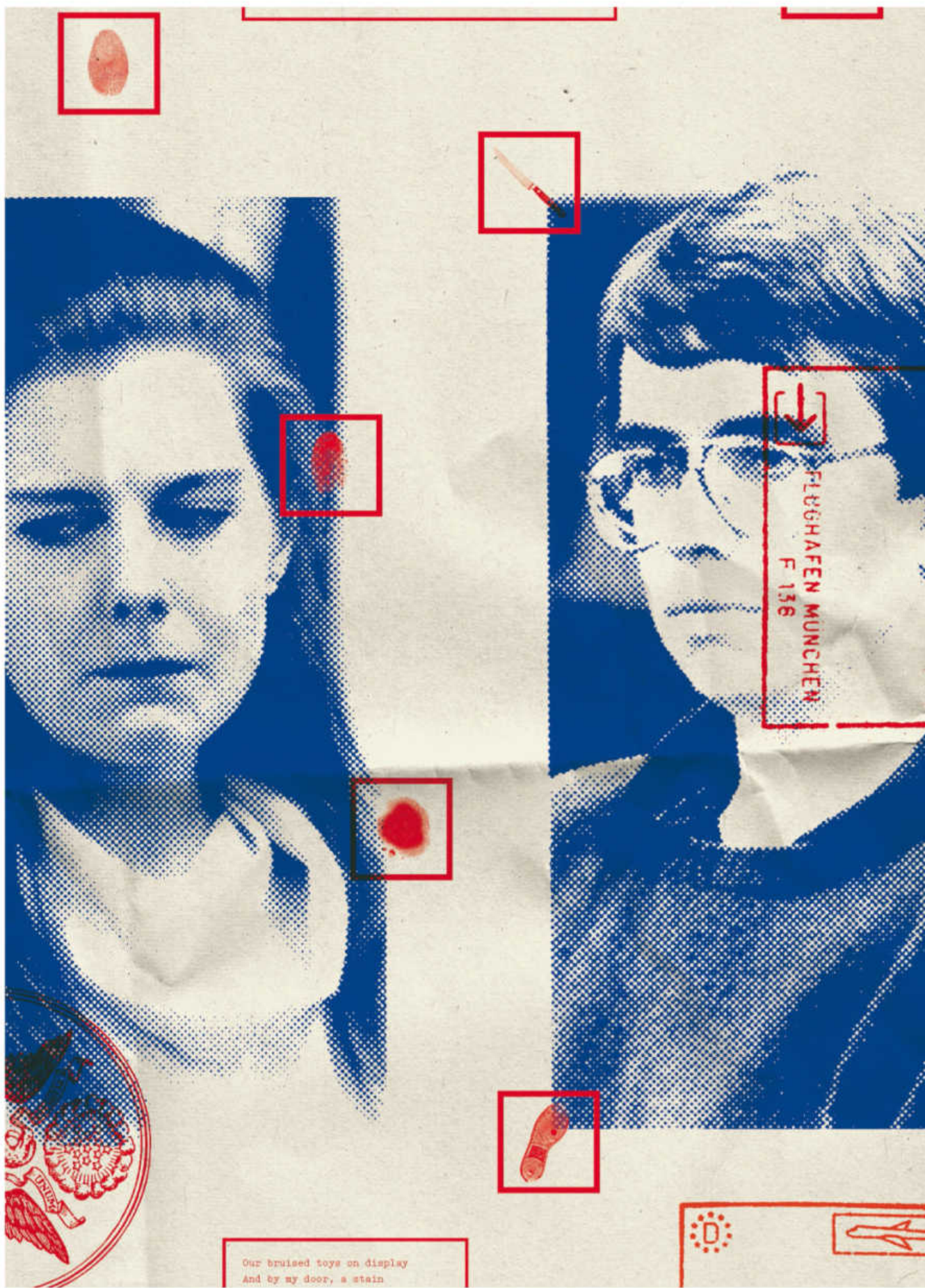
By the time Elizabeth Roxanne Haysom started as a freshman at the University of Virginia, in the late summer of 1984, she was twenty—two years older than most of her classmates. In her final year at Wycombe Abbey, a

boarding school outside London, she had botched her interview for Trinity College, Cambridge, blown off her A levels, then run away with a female lover to travel through Europe, sometimes high on drugs. Living with her parents on her return, feeling that her life had reached an early end, she'd got into U.Va. as an elite Echols Scholar. It wasn't the fairy tale of which she'd dreamed.

At an orientation event, she met Jens Soering. He was a German student, born in Thailand and educated largely in the American South. He had horn-rimmed glasses, Mick Jagger lips, and a priggish haughtiness of manner. That evening, he struggled to make sense of Haysom. She wore her dirty-blond hair short. She had assessing gray eyes. Around campus, she smoked with the cool effortlessness of a nouvelle-vague film star. She talked, like Soering, with an unplaceable British-ish accent.

They were different, though. In high school, in Atlanta, Soering had edited the school newspaper, done photography, acted on the school stage, played guitar in garage bands, won an art award, and taken many A.P. classes. His father, a bureaucrat with the German consular service, had recently transferred from Atlanta to Detroit. Soering's achievements were part of a plan to meet the admissions requirements of German universities. But he had been accepted at U.Va. as a Jefferson Scholar, an elite within the elite, and given a full scholarship and spending money. He rarely saw Haysom as the weeks progressed; they moved in separate worlds. Then, one night in October, they found themselves together at a movie screening. By November, they were meeting in the Tree House, a campus snack bar, and lingering like Beauvoir and Sartre at Les Deux Magots.

Haysom felt herself falling for Soering. She liked his Mitteleuropean aloofness, his rock-band past—*No language,*



"I thought he was my soul mate, my life partner, my creative partner," Elizabeth Haysom says of Jens Soering.

just sound, that's all we need know—and his ambition. She saw him as a tortured artist. Once, in the Tree House, he joked that they had started prattling on together like an old married couple. Haysom took what seemed to be her cue, and she confessed her love for him. In December, she left a letter in his room:

I hated my love for you for a long time. I hated myself for discovering vulnerability, but as the weeks passed I began to understand. I had always believed that I made men fall in love with me so that I could take out all the hatred I felt for them by humiliating them. I despised their cheap lust and easy passions. And in the end I made them hate themselves for loving me and the torture I inflicted. I would make a man humiliate himself to obtain me, then I would give him the best fuck he's ever likely to get and then walk out.

With Soering, she explained, it wasn't like that:

I love you, and it may alter intensity and direction from time to time, but I will always love you with a part of me which no one else will be able to snatch.

Charlottesville in autumn was a restive and romantic place. Soering had a ground-floor dorm room facing the Slaughter Recreation Center. Haysom had a room on a higher floor. The two were together until winter break pulled them apart, sending Haysom to Loose Chippings with her parents and Soering to Detroit with his.

Home depressed him. He'd never really lived in Michigan. His father, Klaus, had a temper, and his mother was an alcoholic, prone to moods and sadness. Haysom, too, was going crazy at home. One of her half brothers described their father as a parent from a previous generation—publicly gregarious; privately reserved, authoritarian—and Haysom had a troubled relationship with her mother. During the winter break, Haysom wrote Soering letters:

21/12/84

A day of raining loneliness. This morning I built my father a desk for his computer. It took all morning. I didn't smoke. Then I went shopping. I bought cigarettes. I bought other things too—my father fell down (I prayed) he got up. . . . My parents began to drink. My father says that the juniper extract used to flavor gin is a potent poison/drug. It causes similar aggression as "speed." My mother begins her 6th gin (I pray she'll use the poker on my cold, guiding father).

Soering, in his letters, tried to channel Haysom's antic stream of consciousness, but he had a more starched-and-pressed mind:

Were I to meet your parents, I have the ultimate "weapon." Strange things are happening within me. I'm turning more and more into a Christ-figure (a small imitation, anyway), I think. I believe I could either make them completely lose their wits, get heart attacks, or they would become lovers (in an *agape* kind of way) of the rest of the world.

In January, he went back to Charlottesville with a buoyant sense of escape. During the next few weeks, he and Haysom visited Loose Chippings when her parents weren't home. One evening, at U.Va., Soering says, he returned from the library to find Haysom alone in bed, hugging her knees. On the inside of her elbow was a small needle mark: heroin, he says she told him. A friend of her dealer had come by, and, well, she was so sorry for using. (Haysom denies this.)

That winter, the Haysoms came to Charlottesville to take the young couple to lunch. They grilled Soering about his family and his past. When the Haysoms hosted a niece of Derek's, a week or so later, they were still talking about the weirdness of the meal. They worried that Soering had insufficient "standing" for their daughter. Nancy Haysom found him oddly jumpy at the table, too.

During spring break, Haysom went skiing in Colorado. Soering stayed in Charlottesville to finish some school projects. One was a screenplay for his creative-writing class, and he acted the way he thought writers should. He perched at the typewriter in his underwear, eating pizza. He tried to smoke a cigarette. His screenplay was about a brilliant sleuth who used Zen philosophy to solve crimes, and, as he typed scenes about corpses, clues, and exotic poisons, he filled a wastepaper basket with discarded drafts. He was trying to plot the perfect murder.

From Haysom's winter correspondence to Soering:

My mother went to her hair appointment, 3 days late.

My father and I cut down cedars for Christmas presents.

Would it be possible to hypnotise my parents, do voo doo on them, will them to death?

It seems my concentration on their death is causing them problems. My father nearly drove over a cliff at lunch, he nearly got squashed by a tree when he got home (and he keeps falling over) and my mother (drunk) fell into the fire. I think I shall seriously take up black magic. . . .

We can either wait till we graduate and then leave them behind or we can get rid of them soon. My mother said today that if some accident befell them she knew I would become a worthless adventurer. More maternal acumen.

On the afternoon of Friday, March 29, 1985, Haysom and Soering rented a gray Chevette and drove to Washington, D.C., where he used his father's Visa card to book a room at the Georgetown Marriott. After checking in, they went to see the movie "Porky's Revenge!" They spent Saturday midday wandering around the neighborhood, then went for a late lunch at a restaurant with a train theme. Soering made a joke about the phallic iconography of the image, in the Freudian paradigm.

On Sunday, they drove back to Charlottesville. Haysom was notified of her parents' murders on Wednesday, when the bodies were discovered. What later interested investigators was the odometer on the Chevette. According to rental records, the car had been driven six hundred and sixty-nine miles between its rental and its return—some four hundred miles more than a trip to and from Washington, D.C. This was the distance from Charlottesville to Washington, Washington to Loose Chippings, and back along the same route.

A suspect profile from the F.B.I. had identified the murderer as a female who knew the family. For a time, suspicion fell on the daughter of a local judge, whose engagement to Haysom's older half brother Julian had ended, Chuck Reid had heard, under pressure from his parents. (Julian says that his parents were actually disappointed by the end of the engagement.) A few weeks before the murders, Reid was told, she had brought knives to a friend, and asked him to take them, because evil spirits were pursuing her.

Reid thought that the woman was skittish, with a different-drummer

kind of imagination, but not a killer. And she had told him an unsettling story. At one point, she said, Elizabeth Haysom had approached her. "I'm the devil," Haysom had told her, according to Reid. "You're the sacrificial lamb." (Haysom denies this.)

On Monday, April 8th, Gardner and another investigator sat down with Haysom at an elementary school where they had set up a field station. Gardner was struck by Haysom's accent. She told him that she had been dating a German, and that they'd rented a car to spend the weekend in D.C. The investigators sent her home but called her back later to ask about the extra miles on the Chevette. She said that she and Soering had got lost on the drive.

In June, Soering and Haysom flew to Europe for a vacation. They returned to U.Va. for summer school, where their romance bloomed. They made love to Joni Mitchell's "Don Juan's Reckless Daughter":

I nearly broke down and cried.
But the split-tongue spirit laughed at me.
He says, "Your serpent cannot be denied."

When school started again in the fall, Soering effectively moved into the house where Haysom lived with roommates and a cat named Snark. On October 6th, he drove to the Bedford County Sheriff's Office to talk with Reid and Gardner. The investigators asked for his fingerprints, footprints, and blood, to help eliminate him as a suspect. Haysom had given hers. Soering balked. He told them that he'd have to clear the request with the German Embassy.

Gardner was feeling pressured for results from the Haysom family—especially from Elizabeth's half brother Howard Haysom, a doctor in Houston, who was due to visit Lynchburg on October 15th. Six days before the visit, Soering phoned Gardner to say that he was busy with schoolwork but that he could meet in a week to give his blood and prints. On the night of Howard Haysom's arrival, Gardner was working late in the field when the sheriff's office patched through an urgent call. It was Howard, livid. Elizabeth and Soering had vanished.

When the investigators got to

Charlottesville, Haysom's roommate handed them a letter from Soering:

Dear Officers Reid and Gardner,
... I assume that especially you, Mr. Gardner, will be very excited by now, which is why I hate to disappoint you (well, that's not *exactly* true ...). ... I suggest that you continue your investigation as before; undoubtedly you will find whom you are looking for. As for me, I am afraid you must remain, as Officer Reid put it, only "99% sure" of my innocence. From what Liz has told me of what you discovered at Loose Chippings, I can only say that I am incapable of such a thing. I do not have many friends, but I think they will substantiate this—and my long-standing dissatisfaction with my life here.

By the time Gardner got back to his office, Soering had become his leading suspect.

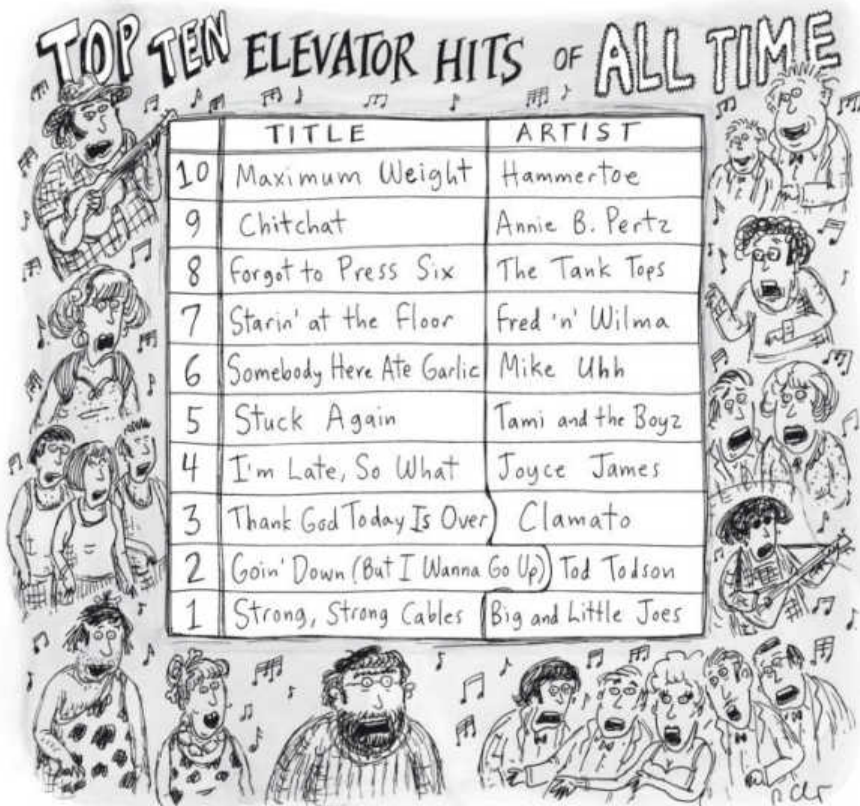
Haysom and Soering followed separate itineraries and rendezvoused that Tuesday, in Paris, under the Arc de Triomphe. Haysom had dyed her hair bright red. From there, they travelled to the small city of Ettelbruck, in Luxembourg. The plan was

to go to Thailand, locate Soering's birth certificate, marry, and apply jointly for Thai passports. They rented a Fiat, planning to drive through France, Switzerland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and onward. It didn't work. At the Bulgarian border, they were told that they would need to get a visa at the Bulgarian Embassy in Belgrade. As Haysom turned the car around, a driver travelling in the opposite direction pulled into their lane. She swerved into the shoulder, where the Fiat blew a tire and careered back through the oncoming traffic; Soering briefly lost consciousness in the crash. Following an appearance in the local traffic court, they decided to fly the rest of the way.

Bangkok was hot and bustling. Haysom loathed it, but Soering was enchanted; the city had an air of louche cosmopolitanism—everyone there seemed to work a shady sideline—and he glided toward the underworld. He bought books about British banking. He and Haysom visited Bangkok's crooked printing shops to obtain false



"Hold on—I'll call in an air strike."



papers, modelled on hers: Canadian driver's licenses, citizenship certificates, and certified passport copies. They had three sets of photos made, rearranging their hair between each set, so that the head shots would seem to have been taken at different times.

As the year drew to a close, they took a thousand-mile bus trip from Bangkok to Singapore, and then flew to Moscow, spending New Year's Eve in a Sheremetyevo airport hotel, drinking vodka. From there, they made their way to Canterbury, where they assumed false identities as Tim and Julia Holte, two married Canadian students at the University of Kent.

The Holtes went to the local branch of Lloyds to open bank accounts. They wanted "check-guarantee cards"—special bank I.D.s, then widely used in England, whereby Lloyds would honor bounced checks of up to fifty pounds. Because the Holtes had made only a small deposit, they were given a four-to-six-week probationary period, during which they had to maintain a certain balance. To wait it out, Haysom and Soering rented a room with a local

family. Soering kept the pair vigilant. They used each other's aliases even when having sex—"Tim!" "Julia!"—in case the sounds happened to carry.

When their check-guarantee cards came, they went to London. Starting on Monday, February 24, 1986, they spent ten hours a day touring the city's Marks & Spencer branches, executing a con around a leather jacket that cost £49.50. One of them would enter the store and buy the jacket with a Lloyds-guaranteed Holte check. The other, entering later, would return a jacket previously purchased at another M. & S. in exchange for cash. The checks would bounce, but M. & S. would get its money, and Lloyds had a policy of not reporting frauds of less than ten thousand pounds. Checks accepted on a Monday took until Friday to clear. When Haysom and Soering started, they had a hundred and twenty Holte checks. By the time the first check bounced, they had spent and cash-redeemed all of them: a profit of six thousand pounds, or nine thousand dollars.

With a deposit of that size, they

could get check-guarantee cards with no waiting period. They went to Bath and opened accounts at Midland Bank under the names Tara Lucy Noe and Christopher Platt Noe. Their new checkbooks came in days, and they rented a flat on Baker Street. As the Holtes, they'd avoided being in the same M. & S. concurrently. This time, Haysom suggested that they go in at the same time but stay apart.

At the last M. & S. they visited, on April 30th, a store employee noticed them and grew suspicious. She followed them onto the street and flagged them for a plainclothes officer.

Chuck Reid quit the police force that spring, to support his family with a better-paying job at a freight company; Ricky Gardner was now alone on the case. On Thursday, May 29, 1986, more than a year after the murders, Gardner got a call from London. Detective Constable Terry Wright, of the Metropolitan Police, wanted to know whether he was acquainted with Elizabeth Haysom or Jens Soering. Wright explained that they were in custody in Richmond, in southwest London. Perhaps Gardner would like to meet with them.

Gardner flew to London four days later with James W. Updike, Jr., Bedford County's prosecutor. They had no warrant, but a magistrate ruled that they could interview the suspects through the weekend. If they failed to find what they were looking for, they would have to return home, and the fraud charges against Haysom and Soering would proceed.

Soering had no lawyer present for these interviews. He was given solicitor-waiver forms, and he signed them. He says that he did so because Wright's colleague Ken Beever had threatened to harm Haysom unless he talked. (No threat is documented, and Beever calls the claim "preposterous.") Soering insists that he repeatedly asked for a lawyer. At one point, Beever asked whether Soering would ever consider pleading guilty to something he didn't do.

"I can't say that for sure right now," Soering replied, "but I can see—I can see it happening, yes. I think it is a possibility. I think it happens in real life."

Late on Sunday, Beever summoned Gardner. Soering had asked to talk with him, without a tape recorder. This time, he told a very different story of what had happened in March of 1985.

While driving to Washington, D.C., Soering said, he and Haysom had talked about the problem of her parents. They objected to her dating him. The idea of killing them, mentioned in the winter letters, arose again. Yet Soering had thought that he could talk things through with them, and, on Saturday night, he'd driven to Loose Chippings alone. Haysom stayed in Georgetown, where—to create an alibi, in case one proved necessary—she bought a pair of tickets to several evening movies.

Derek Haysom had answered the door at Loose Chippings, and served Soering a drink or two. He and the Haysoms sat at the table together, Soering with his back to the window, Derek Haysom to his left. The Haysoms were drinking, and they began to argue. They threatened to have Soering expelled from U.Va. if he kept seeing their daughter. Soering got up to leave. As he rose, Derek Haysom slammed him against the wall, where he hit his head. Soering took up a knife, and struck at Haysom's neck, opening a vein. Haysom yelled, "God, you must be crazy, man!" Nancy Haysom came at him with a knife of her own. Soering wrestled it away from her, grabbed her, and began using her as a shield against Derek Haysom, who was flailing at him with a spoon. Soering slashed Nancy Haysom in the neck, too, then let go of her. He'd lost his glasses in the struggle. Derek Haysom struck him again in the head.

The next thing Soering recalled was tossing tableware, his clothes, and the two knives into a dumpster at the end of the road. He hadn't noticed until then that he had cut his hand. He went back to the house in his socks to wipe away fingerprints and blood; he swirled the stains around Nancy Haysom to obscure his footprints. He washed his hand and bound a towel around it. Then he wrapped himself in a sheet, turned out the lights, and went back to Georgetown to meet Elizabeth, after "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."

At the end of Soering's explanation, Gardner left the room, and returned with Wright and Beever. Soering repeated his account for them. He showed some scars on his fingers, which he said had come from the struggle. On June 13th, a grand jury convened by the circuit court of Bedford County indicted Soering, who remained in custody in England, for the murders.

Both Haysom and Soering underwent psychological evaluations. Haysom's diagnosis was borderline personality disorder, a condition of unstable identity and impulse control. Soering was given a diagnosis of shared delusional disorder, or *folie à deux*. In October, she wrote him what amounted to a Dear John letter: she was going to plead guilty. The following May, she was extradited to Virginia, and her story, during a three-day hearing, seemed to match Soering's confession broadly. She was sentenced to ninety years in prison, as an accessory before the fact.

During one of Gardner's talks with Haysom, she had described, in chilling precision, the exterior of Gardner's house. She knew what it looked like, she said, because Soering had followed Gardner home after their interview, wanting to kill him.

By the terms of the 1961 Vienna Convention, some privileges, including immunity from most criminal and civil prosecution, are extended to a diplomat's household. When Soering confessed, he believed that he had such immunity. If he were extradited to Germany, he would probably be tried as a minor and sentenced to a maximum of ten years, with parole likely in five. Yet, shortly after receiving Haysom's letter, Soering learned that the United States granted such immunity only to employees at Washington, D.C., embassies. If Soering were extradited to Virginia, he would be tried for capital murder.

Soering recanted his confession. He had not killed the Haysoms, he said. Haysom had, and he had taken the blame. The reversal carried no weight. On May 20th, the U.K. informed Germany that it was considering Soering's extradition to Virginia, while ask-

ing that the death penalty not be a sentencing option. But that was a request, not a requirement, and Soering's lawyers fought for more stringent language in a review process that rose to the European Court of Human Rights.

The verdict, delivered on July 7, 1989, was a landmark, the first European ruling on extradition to a death-penalty country. The court agreed that sending Soering into U.S. custody constituted a risk of being "subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." On August 1st, the U.K. agreed to extradition if the U.S. dropped capital charges—which, eventually, it did.

The trial of Jens Soering, which began on June 1, 1990, and lasted three weeks, was the first major trial in Virginia's history to be broadcast on TV. Soering's father had hired a lawyer from Detroit, Richard A. Neaton, to lead the local counsel. In preliminary proceedings, they objected to the cameras, which they worried would result in an unfair trial; the judge, William W. Sweeney, overruled the request. They asked for a change of venue, arguing that Bedford had been saturated with coverage. Sweeney agreed to bring in jurors from nearby Nelson County; he had gathered that people there were less aware of the trial.

Soering's team filed a pretrial motion for Sweeney to recuse himself: he and Nancy Haysom's brother had gone to the Virginia Military Institute together, and, a few years before the murder, Sweeney had attended a party in honor of Nancy Haysom. He had also given an interview to a local magazine, in which he said, "As far as the acts themselves, I don't think [Elizabeth Haysom] planned all that out. It was like double-dare-you. I think she was shocked he took the dare." Sweeney decided that no conflict of interest existed.

To many onlookers, Soering did not carry himself well. He was smirky and officious on camera. The air-conditioner broke during his testimony, making him look clammy. Updike sought to underscore his arrogance.

"Is it an intellectual challenge for

you?" he asked Soering about the cross-examination.

"No, it isn't," Soering said.

"It certainly wouldn't be a challenge for you, with your intellect, to outwit me, would it?"

Soering caught himself. "Well, I think so far you've been outwitting me."

Updike, a man in early middle age, with obedient, golden-retriever eyes and a chestnut mustache, placed his hands on his hips to spread the jacket of his light-blue summer suit. He cocked his head incredulously. "I just can't understand, sir, why you at times are sitting up there, under these circumstances, on trial for murder, *laughing*."

The prosecution's case rested in large part on Soering's recanted confession, and it noted that Soering's blood type, O, was found at Loose Chippings. But Updike's crucial evidence was the more distinct of the two bloody sock prints. The police's first analyst could make no identification. The prosecution summoned a second analyst, Robert Hallett, a forensic-impressions examiner, who had resized the crime-scene photograph to the scale of Soering's police footprint and printed the latter on a transparency sheet. In court, Updike made a show of laying it over the photo of the bloody stain. The two prints appeared to match exactly.

When Haysom gave testimony, she was an inmate at the Goochland Correctional Center for Women, thirty miles west of Richmond. At her own hearing, in 1987, she said that she had not desired the deaths: "I wasn't thinking murder, and it seems that he was." Now she said, "I was much more concerned that he would *not* kill them." Initially, she said that she had seen the alibi movies; now she said that she had bought the tickets but didn't go into the theatre.

When Updike questioned Haysom, he brought up her high-school interest in theatre. "Did you see yourself as Lady Macbeth?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I did," Haysom answered.

On June 21st, Soering was found guilty of the murders of Derek and Nancy Haysom. The jury issued the

maximum punishment available—life in prison—for each death.

Yet some aspects of the murders were still unexplained. If Soering had killed the Haysoms alone, who had made the tennis-shoe print in blood, a mark smaller than Soering's foot? Who had left type-B—Elizabeth's type—blood? Who was responsible for the unidentified fingerprints, including the one on Derek Haysom's shot glass? Soering had misremembered the position of Derek Haysom's body and the clothes that Nancy Haysom had worn, among other things.

Inconsistencies are not disproof; memory is notoriously unreliable. It is also possible that Soering's errors were deliberate, an attempt to avoid conviction. Still, the evidence could have supported different conclusions. "Technically, we had no physical evidence that could have tried it," Chuck Reid told me recently. "If Jens Soering hadn't admitted to it, I don't know that we could have convicted him."

The Buckingham Correctional Center, where Jens Soering has lived since 2009, is in central Virginia, an hour south of Charlottesville. Trees hide the prison from the road; on the approach, the building crops up quickly, wide and beige, a desert palace in the middle of a grassland. When I visited for the first time, last fall, I was led to the Administration Conference Room, which had a long table with fake wood grain and padded office chairs. On the walls were posters saying "THE ESSENCE OF DESTINY" (a river and a sunset on mountains) and "THE SKY'S THE LIMIT" (an eagle over clouds). The room reminded me of high school.

"My first line was going to be 'You're late—ten years too late,'" Soering said, appearing in the doorway with a guard. He moved quickly to a chair and shook my hand with boardroom vigor. At forty-nine, he is no longer a plump-cheeked nebbish. He is wiry and well-defined, with chiselled features and the sort of wide, rectangular glasses that are freshly fashionable. His hair, cropped short, has turned a leaden hue. With a blue short-sleeved oxford over a gray sweatshirt, he looked less

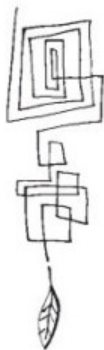
like a convict than like an uncared-for professor of math.

Like a professor, he had come prepared. He flipped open a pocket folder and spread across the conference table notes, outlines, and documents. "Any reasonable human being will come to the conclusion that I shouldn't have been convicted," he said. "That's not the same as proving I'm innocent." For years, Soering has followed the daily regimen of an athlete or a monk, rising at six and going to breakfast. By nine, he's in the weight room or jogging. He spends much of the afternoon on projects of his own.

Soering details his schedule in "One Day in the Life of 179212," the most recent of five books that he has published in English. It takes its title from Solzhenitsyn, and is mostly about prison life, although his work has explored other topics, too. "He's done an astonishing amount of research given the limitation of his resources," Martin Rowe, a co-founder of Lantern Books, which has published many of Soering's titles, says. Soering composes mainly on wide-ruled binder paper, with Bic Cristal pens. Because he makes carbon copies of each letter he sends, for his files, he is used to pressing hard enough to score two pages, and his conversation mimics this penmanship style.

"Especially lately, I've been looking back, wondering what it's all about," he told me. Soering thinks that his trial was a travesty: a weak and circumstantial case that went unchallenged owing to ineptitude and bias. In the nineties, his counsel, Richard Neaton, had his law license suspended twice, once at Soering's behest, for infractions ranging from forgery to incompetence; in 2001, the license was revoked. "If I had committed the murders, I would have committed them the way I committed the check fraud," Soering said—with care and planning. The slaughter of the Haysoms appeared risky, messy, personal.

At her hearing, Haysom was asked about allegations that she had been sexually abused by her mother. She denied them. But Nancy Haysom had taken photographs of her daughter nude, ostensibly as a model for painting, and Elizabeth had showed the



photographs to Soering during a visit to Loose Chippings. He thought that the abuse, which Haysom now acknowledges, could be a motive.

Soering's version of events is detailed in "Nicht Schuldig!"—"Not Guilty!"—a memoir that he wrote in English but that was translated and published, in Germany, in 2012. During the Saturday lunch at the train-themed restaurant, Soering says, Haysom confessed that she was using heroin again. As a result, she owed money to her dealer. To pay the debt, she had arranged to pick up a drug shipment in D.C. and bring it back to U.Va. If she didn't go through with the plan, her dealer would tell her parents about her drug use. Soering says that she asked him to buy a pair of tickets to two movies, "Witness" and "Stranger Than Paradise"—titles that wink slyly at him—to establish an alibi for her drug run. He also says that he bought a single ticket for the midnight showing of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." He says that he'd got annoyed when she didn't return on time and decided to see the movie on his own.

When Haysom finally returned to the hotel, he says, he'd ordered room service and was watching TV. Her forearms bore red-brown smears. She said that she'd killed her parents—drugs had made her do it. Soering says that she pleaded with him to use the movie-ticket alibi to cover her. (Haysom denies this entire account.) Soering explains that, as his mind raced across what he knew from books and movies, it alighted on Sydney Carton, of "A Tale of Two Cities." He decided that he would take the blame to save her from the gallows.

On the night of his sentencing, Soering says, he put a plastic bag over his head and tied it in place with a shoelace. He panicked and broke the bag before he could harm himself, and the horror of his prison life went on. Following his time in the Bedford County jail, he was incarcerated at the Southampton Reception and Classification Center, and then, in 1991, at Mecklenburg, near the southern border of the state. In 1994, Soering's unit was transferred to Keen Mountain, in the Appalachian hills. He hated the

place—the cells were doubles, rather than singles—but he'd ended up with a like-minded cellmate, whom he believed to be innocent as well. By then, too, Soering's appeals for reassessment of his case had started to bear fruit.

If you were really trying to confess, why would you have these blatant errors?" Gail Starling Marshall asked me one morning in the sunroom of her law office, in a house in the rolling countryside outside Charlottesville. From 1986 to 1994, Marshall was a deputy attorney general of Virginia. She is a brisk, unflappable woman with a shock of white hair clipped close on one side and swept edgily over the ear on the other. In 1994, she began examining Soering's case.

"When I looked at the transcript and did some research, I realized that there had been multiple—multiple—very prejudicial errors in the trial," she said. These errors, she believed, provided grounds for a habeas-corpus petition, which reexamines significant errors made in the process of trying a case. In 1996, Marshall filed with the Virginia Supreme Court, arguing, among other things, that Soering's Fifth Amendment rights had been violated by the admission into domestic evidence of his lawyerless confession abroad.

Soon afterward, a former deputy sheriff in Bedford County approached her. Within days of the murders, he said, he had picked up two vagrants in Bedford: not long after the crime, there had been a multiple-stab-wound murder in nearby Roanoke, and he was suspicious. He had let the men go, but later discovered a knife in the back seat of his car. In Marshall's view, disclosing nothing about this before the trial amounted to a Brady violation, a prosecutorial failure to share potentially exculpatory evidence with the defense.

She also concluded that Hallett's footprint analysis was bunk. "Smeared socks are not unique," she told me dryly. Like gloved handprints, they lack dermal ridges—marks of skin-to-surface contact that show what part of the foot struck where, and whether it moved, distorting the outline. Competent counsel, Marshall said, could easily have rebutted Hallett's testimony by summoning a footprint specialist. Marshall's own experts found that the prints could not be sized with precision, but they were inclined to agree with the police's initial analyst, who pronounced them the footprints of a woman or a boy.

In 1998, the Virginia Supreme Court denied Marshall's habeas petition. She filed a federal habeas petition



"How's the war going?"

with the U.S. District Court, which acknowledged procedural errors but disagreed that they were significant. When the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit denied the petition, too, she went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The case was never taken up. Still, she retained what she describes as a “moral certainty” not only that Soering didn’t get a fair trial but that he did not commit the murders. “It’s an innate sense when you delve into the circumstances of the crime” and its aftermath, she said. Virginia prisons weigh misconduct in infraction points, which can accrue from behavior as innocuous as sleeping through

an early-morning head count. Even placid prisoners often end up with a few, but Soering, after more than twenty-five years, has none. It defied belief, she thought, that a bookish, well-behaved kid would commit a rage-fuelled knife attack on two people he’d met once and then, for nearly thirty years, be pristinely behaved in one of the most violent and crazy-making environments on the planet.

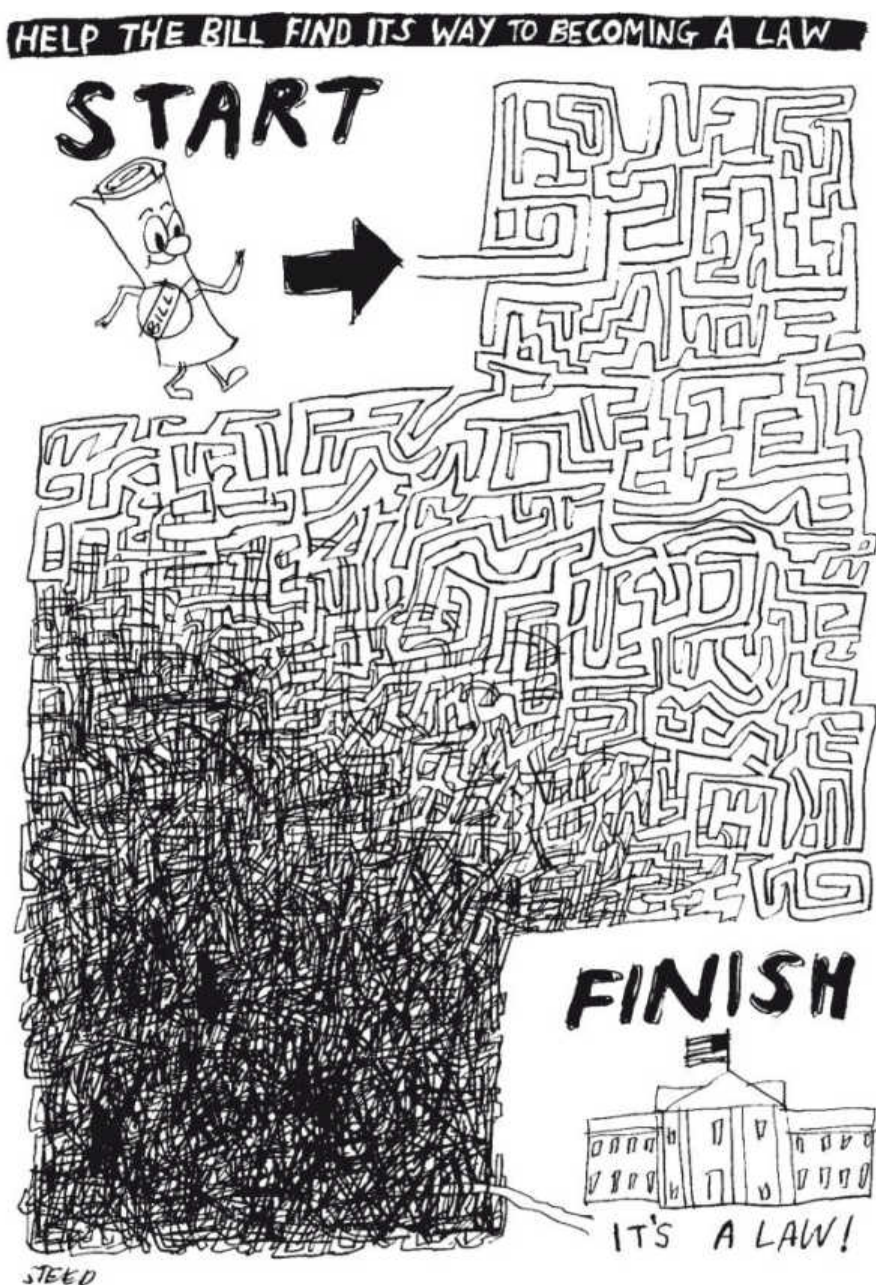
In 1999, Soering’s unit was transferred a second time, from Keen Mountain to Wallens Ridge, a super-max facility. He was there for less than a year; he negotiated a transfer to an-

other prison after being hit with a ricocheting rubber pellet from a guard’s shotgun. In that time, his spirits crashed. His mother had died, from alcoholism, and he blamed himself. Listening to music began to make him too sad, so he started reading intensively. He read “The Last Temptation of Christ,” which the Catholic Church had condemned, and its depiction of Jesus fascinated him. He read the Bible and began studying “centering prayer”—a meditation regimen, based on breathing and word repetition. The technique was intended as a purification of the spirit, but for Soering, who had been obsessing over Haysom and the crime, it also served as a cleansing of the mind.

On Easter, 2002, he was confirmed as a Catholic. The previous year, he’d started working on a book about how centering prayer could help people who were spiritually “imprisoned.” The manuscript was organized by the principles of *lectio divina*, an early Benedictine approach to scriptural study, and his prose style was unfancy but erudite. The first long text examined was from Luke 4: the temptation of Christ. “The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here.’” The middle of the work contains, as an interpolation, Soering’s account of the murders and his case.

A visitor to the prison offered to distribute the manuscript to publishers. Rejections flooded back, but Father Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk and centering-prayer advocate, saw the book as a triumph, and he passed it to an editor at Lantern Books. “There’s hardly a worse environment than prison for centering prayer to flourish, but when it does it makes those people better than those on the outside,” Keating told me. When “The Way of the Prisoner” was published, in 2003, it sold modestly, but it gained supporters. Soering, who had run a centering-prayer group and a Tai Chi class behind bars, was reborn as something other than a teen-age killer.

In 2004, he returned from breakfast one morning to find that his cellmate had hanged himself. Soering’s



second book, "An Expensive Way to Make Bad People Worse," was an extensively researched case against the American prison system. In the style of a sociology monograph, Soering wove a counterintuitive argument that prison reform ought to be a cause for the fiscally minded political right. He drew on statistics to describe costly growth in the prison population. He traced how the United States' use of prison for nonviolent offenses drained budgets with no benefit. In his next two works, Soering split the difference between his cause and his faith, even as the latter was tested.

When Soering's wealthy grandmother died, in 1999, she willed him an inheritance that included a German town house. During a family squabble about the home, Klaus Soering cut off contact. Meanwhile, Soering's growing ranks of supporters had turned to a new project: repatriating him to a German prison, through an obscure agreement of the Council of Europe. Repatriation would not require Soering to be declared innocent or fit for release. But a letter of family support would help his case when applying for approval.

In 2008, Soering wrote to his father, requesting a note. He was told that Klaus was too infirm to submit one. His uncle supplied one instead, but the repatriation request was denied. The next morning, he woke up feeling empty. His belief in God, he knew, had gone. "It felt like half of me was missing," he told me. And, in spite of going through the motions of centering prayer every day for nine months, he was unable to get it back.

The decision about whether to repatriate Soering starts with the Virginia governor. In the late two-thousands, that was Tim Kaine, who is now the state's junior senator. In October, 2009, Tom Elliott, a deacon who became invested in Soering's case after the prisoner wrote to him, helped Richmond's bishop, Walter Sullivan, and a deacon named Chris Malone to arrange a meeting with Kaine to discuss sending Soering home. Although Catholic ministry was Elliott's spiritual vocation, he'd had a decades-long intelligence career, at one point run-

ning an N.S.A. station in West Germany during the late Cold War. Since retiring, he'd amassed and indexed thousands of pages of documentation pertaining to Soering's case.

The Governor told Sullivan and Malone that he did not think that Soering was innocent. He hadn't got a straight answer from the Germans about what would happen on Soering's return. There would have to be a prison-to-prison transfer, and the Germans had to promise that Soering would stay locked up for a period of time.

Lawyers in both countries raced to design a legal bridge to meet these requirements. Soering, then serving out his twenty-ninth year, had already exceeded the equivalent German punishment for his crime, and the German courts worked up a mechanism to award him a special, extra-long sentence. A path was ready by late December, and, on January 12, 2010, Kaine informed Attorney General Eric Holder that he consented to the repatriation.

On January 16th, Robert McDonnell was sworn in as Virginia's new governor. Three days later, he retracted Kaine's approval. It was especially wrenching to Soering because, in 2009, evidence from Loose Chippings had been DNA-tested. Of forty-two examined samples, thirty-one were so degraded that DNA typing was not possible. Eleven offered some information, but not enough for a match; the blood could have come from the victims. Much of it was male.

In the summer of 1985, Tony Marlin Buchanan, the proprietor of a transmission auto shop near the Lynchburg city limits, was asked to repair a two-door coupe whose undercarriage was covered in mud and grass. Looking inside, he found the floor in front matted with dried blood, and a bloody knife had been shoved between the driver's seat and the console. People went deer hunting in the area, and Buchanan assumed that the car had been used for "spotlighting": a technique of stunning game in headlights. A young woman had paid with a credit card, but she said that the car belonged to a young man who accompanied her. Buchanan forgot about the

episode until he saw an article about Loose Chippings and, he says, recognized Haysom in the photo: "The girl who was in here with her damn car!" He was puzzled, though, by the photo of Soering. It wasn't the man whom he had seen.

Buchanan, a Bronze Star Vietnam veteran with a graying mustache, is retired now, living in the hills outside Lynchburg, and I visited him there one day in winter. He showed me to a sofa, and I sat. Buchanan continued to stand.

"Now, first things first," he said crisply. "Let's see some identification." I fished around in pockets and came up with a business card. Buchanan scrutinized it for a long time. Then he reached into the back of his pants and drew a semiautomatic gun.

"You understand," he said. "This is because I don't know who you *really* are."

Buchanan sat and laid the gun down on the coffee table in front of him. Sometimes, as we spoke, he'd reach forward and touch it, as if about to take it up. "No way—that little S.O.B. with his glasses was not in the shop," he said, of Soering. The guy with the bloody car had hair that was parted on the side but long in front. "When Soering's picture come in the paper, he didn't have no hair over like that," Buchanan said. Then he leaned toward me with a grin I could not read. "The guy in the shop with her looked like *you*."

Buchanan picked up his weapon and, without explanation, left the room. He came back with a binder. Inside were photographs that Soering's supporters had sent him for identification. Buchanan had cartooned crazy droopy hair on most of them.

After Buchanan realized that the man with the car was not Soering, he said, he'd tried getting in touch with Soering's legal team. He alerted Judge Sweeney, whom he knew from a veterans' organization. He'd called Ricky Gardner, too. Neither had seemed to care. "He kind of brushed me off," Buchanan said, of Gardner. More strangely, both Gardner and Sweeney later denied ever hearing from him. (Haysom, for her part, denies being at Buchanan's shop, and says that she didn't have a credit card.) Later, he

was put in touch with Soering's parole lawyer, Gail A. Ball, who took an affidavit. Nothing came of that, either.

Before I left, Buchanan presented me with a slender paperback book. It was his military memoir, published with Warwick House, a local press. Vietnam was another thing people tended not to believe you about, he said, so he'd wanted to get it down. Before he bid me farewell, he amiably inscribed the title page. The memoir was called "Women Made Me Do It."

Last year, Soering had a visit from a stranger who had flown to Virginia to see him after acquiring the diary and some letters of a man who'd known Haysom at U.Va. The letters began in May, 1985, after the murders; the man wrote cryptically of Haysom's "situation." In a spring diary entry, he complained about his car being dead.

Nothing in the journal entries and letters that I read specifically incriminates the writer; the entry about the car predates the murders by a few weeks. But they do suggest an intimate relationship. In a letter to Haysom a few months later, the man wrote critically of Soering, whom he'd met. He found him "an uneven child/man, heavier on the former, unsure and overbearing in an attempt to compensate."

Soering was disconsolate after he read the letters. When I asked about them at the Buckingham conference table, he teared up. All this time, he said, he'd thought that, maybe, *maybe*, if things had worked out differently, he and Haysom could have ended up together. The letters had challenged his faith in the real romance that stood for all the magic that might still redeem his life. "Maybe all I was was a sugar daddy, because she was screwing other people on the side," he said bitterly, pounding his pen into the tabletop. It struck me then that, for all of Soering's dark experiences, certain of his innocences were puzzlingly intact.

The political stakes of Soering's case seem to rise a little every year. During a May, 2010, congressional hearing, Eric Holder said that he was waiting to see how Virginia would settle the repatriation issue. McDonnell

wrote Holder a prickly reply: "I want to formally reiterate that Virginia has clearly revoked authorization for a transfer." The sentiment was shared by the Haysoms. Nancy Haysom's brother Risque Benedict had sent his state senator a letter objecting to Soering's deportation. Howard Haysom had written to Governor Kaine, calling the repatriation "a shameful, shameful decision."

Soering's counsel fired back. Steven D. Rosenfield, a civil-rights lawyer, filed suit contesting McDonnell's revocation of consent, on the ground that it had become a federal concern as soon as Kaine authorized repatriation. A new governor could no more "repeal" a signed, sealed, and delivered order moving the process to the Department of Justice than a quarterback could recall a completed pass. But the circuit court ruled against Soering, and the Virginia Supreme Court didn't take up the case. (Soering's father recently wrote a letter endorsing his return.)

Meanwhile, Soering took steps to clarify what was opaque. At the suggestion of a parole investigator, Soering's parole lawyer hired a private eye named Dave Watson, a gruff retired homicide detective. Watson took the case on the condition of his independence: he would not hold back any of his findings, even if they pointed to Soering's guilt. In a September, 2012, affidavit for Soering's parole board, Watson took issue with Hallett's sock-print overlay, presented to the jury. When he reviewed analyses of the full range of prints that the police had collected from Soering and Haysom, it was unclear whose foot matched better. He said that he was also "troubled" by the inconsistencies in Haysom's testimony. On the other hand, he told me, he'd found nothing to prove Soering's innocence. "If he's just an accessory after the fact, he got pretty well screwed," Watson said. "If he is the one who killed these people, he's pretty lucky."

After testifying at Soering's trial, Haysom underwent a kind of molting. She quit smoking, and enrolled in a computer-aided design course at the prison. She got certified

by the American Drafting Design Association, and began to teach the course; some of her students went on to do drafting work for Boeing. When she was transferred to a new prison, Fluvanna, in 1998, the CAD program moved with her.

At Fluvanna, Haysom learned to train rescue dogs. She began approaching her human students as if they were fearful animals; her favorites were the ones who hated school, because she enjoyed flipping them. In 2007, she was certified as a Braille transcriber and started Brailleing books. At the moment, she is finishing her bachelor's degree through an Ohio University distance-learning program. "She's entirely different from the evening I met her," Phyllis Workman, a cousin who first encountered Elizabeth as a teen-age "heroin addict," told me.

Not long ago, Haysom received some watercolors and oil pastels; she says she wants to paint prison scenes in the Norman Rockwell style. For a while, she wrote a column about prison life for the *Fluvanna Review*. Last year, a poem she composed, "An Ordinary Prison," won the PEN American Center's prison-writing competition. In it, she described:

An ordinary household
of hungry bleeding women
hunched over scores and crumbs
Burning their hair straight
Burning their lives down
Burning their popcorn in a microwave
just like ordinary people
on the subway.

It was not her first literary success. In 1997, Haysom mailed a novel she had written to Writers House, an agency in New York. Simon Lipskar, a young agent, picked it from the slush pile. "It showed real literary merit and an originality of voice and structure," Lipskar, now the president of Writers House, says. In 1998, he wrote a letter to the parole board about her creative talent. An editor at Henry Holt liked the manuscript, too, but wanted revisions. In the midst of her correspondence with Lipskar, Haysom was transferred to Fluvanna, and Lipskar lost contact. She gave up the novel for dead.

Recently, Lipskar dug out the manuscript and sent it to me. "Memoirs of

a Phantom Leg,” nearly five hundred pages in typescript, is about an avant-garde artist who loses her leg in a skiing accident. The governing metaphor in Haysom’s mind was starting at the top and racing down. A skier knows the risks—they’re part of the sport’s thrill—but maybe one time her ski hits a small rock and she goes flying. Then everything is different. How did the change happen? The narrator says, “I must find the root. The first moment.”

The book has several epigraphs. One is an inscription at a German naval officers’ school: “Say not ‘This is the truth’ / but ‘So it seems to me to be as I now see / the things I think I see.’” Another is from Niels Bohr: “A great truth is a truth whose opposite is also a great truth.”

One day, I went to talk with Haysom, who is now fifty-one, at Fluvanna. She entered the white cinder-block visitors’ room with amused self-consciousness. She wore baggy jeans, a pale denim shirt, and a pair of small, oval tortoiseshell glasses. Her hair, still dirty blond, was bobbed above the ears and neatly parted on one side.

“This whole thing with Jens feels like a public divorce,” she told me when we sat. “I’ve chosen to do my time and to deal with it my way, and he’s dealing with it in his.” She hoped that Soering would be repatriated: “I want him to go back to Germany so bad. *Please, go back to Germany.*”

Haysom told me that her love for Soering had been so true at the start that it had taken her weeks to figure out how to deal with it. “When your mother is your lover,” she said wryly, “you get confused by affection.” Her boarding-school accent is gone now, replaced with a faintly Southern one; only certain word choices, such as “disorientated,” hinted at her far-flung past. When I brought up the man who wrote the letters, she appeared confused. “I don’t know what to say,” she told me. “We were lovers for a week?” They’d had a fling on a ski trip. In a letter she sent me later, she described him as her “last breath of freedom.”

“I dated some really nice guys, but it was always out of the shell—I *performed*,” she said. With Soering, things had been different. “I thought he was my soul mate, my life partner, my cre-



“Help! I can’t swim! No immediate danger, but it does worry me.”

ative partner,” she said. “He opened this door for me which some people might say it would be good to keep closed.” Haysom told me that she and Soering began having sex only on the night of her parents’ funeral: he’d had hangups about intercourse until that moment, and her own sexual avidity ran in odd channels because of her mother. (Soering says their sexual encounters began months earlier.) When I asked her about some erotic letters she had sent Soering long before then—“my lips pressed into you, and my tongue licking your lips, your teeth, sucking on your tongue, holding it, biting it, sucking your breath away”—she told me that she was simply trying to entice him. She took a good deal of responsibility for the murders, calling them “my crime,” but denied being at her parents’ house that night.

One of the prison staffers came in to bring Haysom lunch. She didn’t want the food but took a couple of the beverages: “fake apple juice,” as she called it, and milk, both sealed in plastic sacks. She tried to tear them open with her teeth, apologizing all the while—prison, she says, wreaks havoc on manners—and, when that failed, stuck her head out the door and

asked the guard, “Do you have a pen or something I could stab this with?”

Haysom told me that she’d had a great shrink a few years ago who helped her come to terms with her mother’s abuse. Soering’s account of her entanglement with heroin was a fabrication, she said; the only drug she’d ever used in the United States was marijuana. Her court testimonies about drug use had been efforts to explain away her emotional disequilibrium and thus avoid coming clean about the incest. Her half brother Veryan says that he now finds her genuinely remorseful: “I have forgiven her.” Julian resumed contact some years ago. Haysom wrote to Howard, but never heard back. She said, “I think the happiest part of my life was when I was living on the streets of Europe—and I was lost.”

Haysom’s style contrasted with that of Soering, who lays out arguments in his defense at every turn. She was defending herself, too, but her approach was oblique. I was puzzled that she kept talking about her awful driving—she was a menace, she said, always dinging up rental cars—until I realized she was trying to tell me that she couldn’t have driven the Chevette to Loose Chippings. (Soering says her

driving was fine; he told me that *he* couldn't have driven there, because he'd been there only twice and couldn't have managed the route in the dark.)

I asked Haysom about the tennis-shoe print in blood, too small for Soering's foot. She said that it was a mystery to her, but that her mother—unlike her—had dainty feet: "I believe my mother walked in her own blood." (Nancy Haysom was not wearing tennis shoes.)

In talking, Haysom consistently looked past the murders with a kind of long view, as if they had been a mysterious event, like a horrific bout of food poisoning. She seemed to see Loose Chippings as the history of a man and a woman who came together by buying into each other's stories and then came apart, distrustfully, holding tight to accounts that had become inviolably their own—in other words, a love affair that ended.

"I have just one thing to say about Lady Macbeth, because apparently there's no one who's read the play," she said suddenly. "It was Lady Macbeth

who died of remorse and grief and killed herself. It was Macbeth who discovered his true nature."

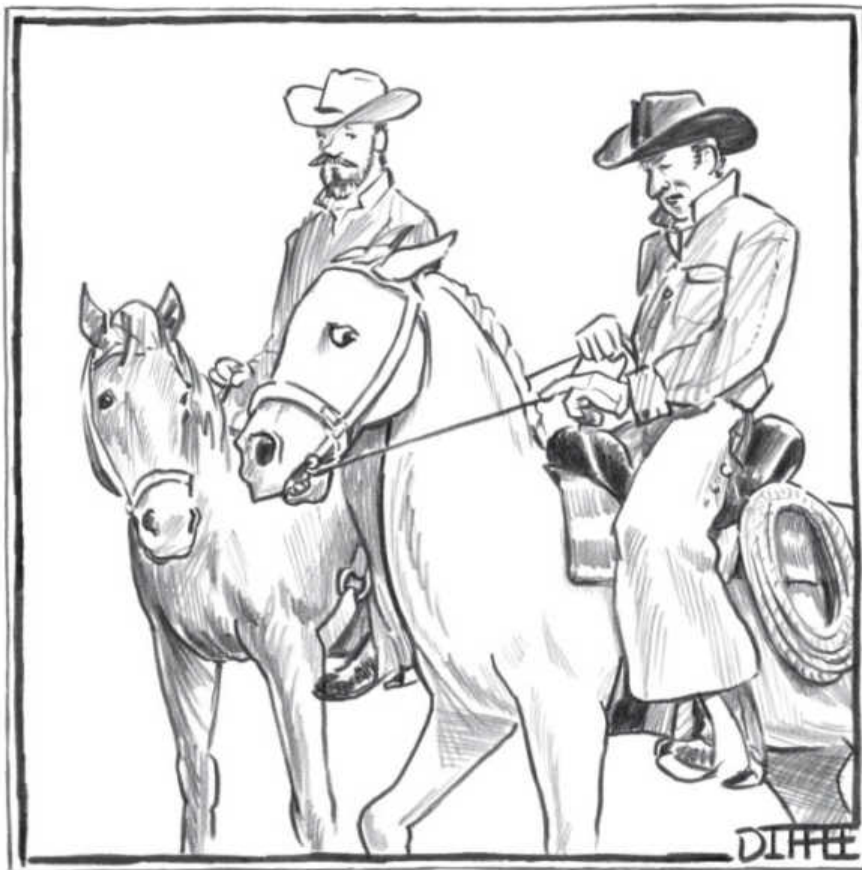
The crimes of which Haysom and Soering were convicted, it has become increasingly probable, weren't the murders that occurred. While Soering could have killed Derek and Nancy Haysom alone, as he confessed, it would have been impossible for him to leave prints smaller than his foot in the blood. It is likewise hard to imagine Haysom single-handedly knife-murdering two adults, one of them a large man. Were the verdicts, even if arrived at through selective evidence and legal error, actually unjust? Dave Watson, the private detective, told me he thought that the police had focussed on "the right people." The question wasn't whether Haysom and Soering were involved, he said, but to what extent.

Could Soering and Haysom have operated as a team? Nobody is known to have seen either of them in Georgetown on that Saturday night. The mur-

ders, for that matter, may not have taken place on Saturday evening at all. Forensic analysts speak of a "window of death": the period from the last time the victim was known to be alive to the latest moment when biological indicators would allow death to have occurred. The window for the Haysoms comprised the entire weekend, and Haysom and Soering's movements during that period were in large part unconfirmed. Soering could have planned to confess to the crime, to protect Haysom. If he was convicted, he would get a few years' imprisonment in Germany, after which he and Haysom could reunite. The plan would have collapsed when Soering learned that he didn't have diplomatic immunity and Haysom broke off their relationship. They'd accuse each other, because the truth would implicate them both more deeply. His coverup would have a troublesomely literary quality, its contours taken from Dickens, the Bible, and Hollywood cliché—the drug run (one last job, and I'm out), the femme fatale (I've got myself in a real bad fix)—because he is a researcher; he draws on texts. Haysom's version would have a fantastical air, because that was how her own mind worked. Loose Chippings would be a tale about two storytellers who aroused each other's imaginations and composed a vast creative project not on paper but in life.

Of course, nothing specifically supports this story. Unlike the convicting narrative, it could explain the tennis-shoe print, but the question of motive remains elusive. Haysom and a jury said that Soering brutally murdered two people to please a dormitory girlfriend he had barely started seeing in earnest. Soering says that, on learning that his new girlfriend had butchered her parents in a fit of pique, he kept on dating her and, in fact, took her on a lovely holiday to his homeland. Or it may be that they killed together. None of these scenarios seem plausible. One seems to have occurred. The thin vein running through them all is belief: a young man embracing a wildly romantic story and striving to live within it.

That much we can understand. For most people, life means believing narratives as wishful as the fairy tales that Soering was in thrall to. We hold that



"Quit saying 'President Trump.' You're spookin' the horses."

heartfelt deeds will make a difference; stories starting with a meet-cute will, by the logic of plot, end well. We find ourselves in hard-strummed songs; we cherish characters in books and shows for seeming like real people, though our sense of what is genuine is shaped largely by what we watch and read. *I think it happens in real life*, Soering had told his questioners, of false confessions. Was he speaking as an heir to these mythologies, or as a dark manipulator? What unified the people I spoke with was that they all believed in a heroic storyline: the narrative of justice served, of injustice assuaged through process, of redemption sought in faith and good work. Somebody was lying. The killer was the person, or people, who had seen the other side of these beliefs, and knew how expectations and a sense of rightness could be conjured by playing into common arcs of plot. A wrongful-conviction storyline, for instance. Or the story of a scattered, vulnerable college woman overcome. At least one of the people implicated has been hiding the truth with a writer's mind.

Soering mails Angela Merkel a Christmas card every December, and this year she returned the cheer. In February, during her conversations with President Obama, Merkel raised the subject of Soering's repatriation. The gesture followed mounting public interest in the case. In July, 2013, Germany's minister of justice had written to Eric Holder, reaffirming that Germany wanted Soering back. Half a year later, Christoph Strässer, the German commissioner for human-rights policy and humanitarian aid, submitted a petition signed by a hundred and twenty members of the Bundestag, urging Virginia's governor, Terry McAuliffe, to reauthorize Kaine's repatriation plan. Christian Wulff, Germany's former President, had similarly written to McDonnell. Repatriation has become, for them, both a human-rights cause and a policy argument, a way of championing the rehabilitative German model over the costly, punitive American one. "It is an essential part of our justice system that criminals deserve a second chance and need to have the perspective of a life in freedom," Wulff told me. "Mr. Soering has been in jail for

thirty years, more than half of his lifetime, for a crime that many in Germany believe he didn't commit."

McAuliffe, in whose hands the decision to repatriate to a German prison now rests, has been quiet. A member of Soering's legal team says that it brokered a deal with McAuliffe's administration: Soering would temper his noisy activism on the issue of repatriation if the Governor would grant a fifteen-minute audience on the subject. (McAuliffe's office denies that conditions were placed on a meeting.) A legal document was sent to McAuliffe's staff in early summer, as a reference for the meeting, and—when there was no reply—a follow-up letter. So far, no meeting with the Governor has been granted.

Soering has never used the Web, and yet today his Facebook page and eponymous Web site attract a large international following. Bernadette Faber, a secondary-school teacher who leads German publicity, says, "My main job is to help an innocent man to be free." She learned about Soering from a TV program in 2007, the same year that Karin Steinberger, a reporter and editor at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, wrote a widely circulated article on his case. A fresh wave of publicity will reach Europe this winter, with a documentary called "The Promise," a collaboration between Steinberger and the filmmaker Marcus Vetter; it is slated for a number of festivals, and will go into European and American release in March. The film is told from Soering's point of view, though Vetter withholds judgment on the matter of guilt. "Whether he or she committed the crime, they were young," Vetter says. "When should the punishment end? How much punishment can society accept?"

The last time I visited Soering, he'd begun growing a beard. Friends of his told me that they had never seen his spirits so low. A Virginia prison had been shut down, and its inmates had been merged into the already overflowing Buckingham facility; fights were breaking out, and Soering despaired of the system's claims of justice. Last September, Bob McDonnell

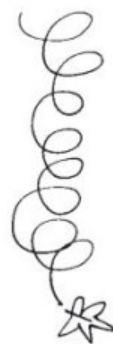
and his wife were found guilty of multiple federal corruption charges. In a letter to the judge, Tim Kaine asked that he consider McDonnell's record of public service during sentencing; as of now, McDonnell is still free.

Yet Soering's sense of desperation seemed to have given him a new wind. He recently wrote an essay proposing a counterterrorism strategy against the

Islamic State, drawn from his studies of the Koran. He'd also begun listening to music once again—Etta James, Pink Floyd, and others, even tracks he'd once found painful. There was only one song he avoided: "Kiss Me," by the Christian pop band Sixpence None the Richer. It had come out after he was in prison, and yet, through the alchemy of sentiment, it had begun carrying him back to his first year of college. The young love it described—"Kiss me, down by the broken tree house, / Swing me upon its hanging tire"—gouged him. "There's a kind of goofy innocence to it which reminds me of myself," he told me. Tears ran down his cheeks and dripped onto his fingers on the table.

Soon after that, I got a letter from Haysom. I'd been dazzled by Soering's description, in "Nicht Schuldig!," of the vacation that the two of them took to Europe, three months after the murders. He'd written a dreamy passage about days in his grandmother's Swiss chalet, on Lake Geneva. The house was perched so high in the Alps that it sat above the cloud line. He and Haysom used to make love on the balcony as it rained on the lake below. I'd mentioned it to Haysom. In her letter, she said that her memory was different.

"Not only do I not remember Jens' grandmother's chalet having a balcony (surely I would have stood on it, smoked Camels, and looked at the stars—I'm a stargazer), I don't think it had a view of Lake Geneva," she recalled. In her version, the chalet looked over a valley, and was backed by a mountain. Yet she remembered a lovely time in Europe. "Not important at all," she wrote, her handwriting dancing across the page, "but it's a bit strange when one's reality is entirely reshaped by someone else's imagination." ♦





DESIGN BY RODRIGO CORRAL

He comes up to her on the dance floor. “Nice purse,” he says almost immediately.

“Nice Charlie Brown sweater,” she says. She actually means it, too. She glimpsed him at the bar earlier, talking to his friends, and the black zigzag stripe running around his torso had made her smile, despite herself, into her cosmopolitan.

His name is Tony. He’s a law student at N.Y.U., originally from Maine, now living in Williamsburg. “So where are you from?” he asks as he passes the bartender his credit card.

She says it as the bass drops and the crowd of dancers lets out a cheer.

“You mean, like, Columbia University?” he shouts.

“Sure,” she says. Her purse tonight is made of striped Andean cloth, yellow and red, with blue tassels. It’s big and bulky. People keep brushing up against it as they crowd toward the bar.

He’s still smiling, as if waiting for her to go on. So she leans in close and whispers into his ear, using as much hot breath as possible: “I’ve got some goodies, if you’re interested.”

They stumble outside four hours later, blinking in the watery light like woodland creatures emerging from hibernation. Eventually, he runs his fingers through his hair and says, “You taking the A train?”

As the subway car pulls out of the station with a groan, he turns to her and says, “You have something on your nose.” He reaches out, fingers fluttering by her nostrils like a blurry peach moth, and she ducks.

“Please don’t touch me,” she says, taking out a folded square of toilet paper. The baggie is in the ladies’ room at the club, licked clean and crumpled, crammed in the disposal can for sanitary pads.

“Sorry,” he says, not sounding that upset. He crosses his legs and wraps his fingers around his kneecap, as if cuddling it. The wrist poking out of his jacket is still a New York-winter pale.

She dabs the toilet paper against her nostrils, sniffing loudly. Sitting across from them is a group of three

girls. They’re wearing flower-patterned dresses, glittery American Apparel leggings, long dangly earrings, brown oxfords. One girl is leaning forward with her head bowed, cradling a giant green backpack in her lap like a baby. Without staring at the girls too directly, she can tell that their eyeliner isn’t smudged, their hair is smooth and straightened, their concealer still effectively hiding any blemishes on their upper jawlines. She swallows and rubs the toilet paper against her nose even harder, letting out a cough for good measure.

“So what are your plans for today?” Tony says, reaching for an untied shoelace. Hours earlier, she’d mistaken it for a long black worm drowning in a puddle as they stood smoking outside the club entrance.

She almost says, “Watch porn and masturbate,” but instead says, “Just chilling, I guess.” Was it a thick clump, clinging to her nostril hairs? A delicate crust around the rims? Did she look like the Dormouse, abruptly waking up after falling asleep in the sugar bowl at the Mad Hatter’s tea party?

“I might cook some steak, if I go to the store.” His eyes are bloodshot, but his pale skin is clear.

“Cool,” she says, furiously digging in her nose as deep as she can. One of the girls, the one with perfectly straight bangs, is staring at her, or maybe she’s just looking vacantly at the subway map on the wall behind her.

“Maybe some *chile con carne*. Chili with flesh.” He laughs.

Carne means “meat,” but she doesn’t correct him. She’s about to tell him that sounds good when something thin peels away from her nostril wall. It makes a faint crackling sound beneath her fingernail. She tries to stay calm as she yanks it out, ripping some nose hairs, cupping it in her palm as her eyes water. She can hear the girls’ voices in her head, mouths forming O’s and eyes bulging as they stare and nudge each other: “OMG, look at her, she’s totally Michael Jacksoning!”

It’s a dry leaf. Disintegrating in her hand, crumbling into thin brown flakes. She can suddenly feel the stem, shoved high up her nasal cavity, scratchy

and tickling. She smashes her nose against her cardigan sleeve and blows hard.

“Whoa!” Tony says. The girl with the green backpack looks up, and one of her friends makes a noise that could be either a cough or a choked laugh.

She squeezes the leaf bits tightly in her fist and drops them onto the floor, wiping her hand off on her bare leg. For a second, she thinks she hears giggling, but when she looks up the girls haven’t moved. She makes eye contact with the backpack girl, who raises her eyebrows and pulls her lips inward, the classic American expression of feigning indifference.

As the subway car slowly whines to a stop, she says, “This is me,” at the same moment that Tony says, “So, I’ll see you around?”

She’s calling Paco the second she steps into her apartment. When his voice mail beeps, she’s already speaking, her recording starting in midsentence: “—some nerve. I don’t know what you’re doing, but that’s some serious bullshit, man. That shit is not O.K. And I know that you know what I’m talking about, so please don’t bother to pretend otherwise.” She likes the way her voice sounds as she moves around the kitchen, picking up and putting down dirty glasses, streaked with the grainy smears of ancient smoothies. She can hear New York in her voice—the years of arguing with Brooklyn dealers, the grinning college boys at Upper West Side house parties. Her head suddenly fills with an image of her grandmother, the way she’d lean against the kitchen doorframe back home, brow furrowed as she reprimanded the maid with kind, expansive hand gestures: *I just don’t understand, you see. What is so hard about following the menu that I specifically wrote up for you? Do you think you could maybe explain that to me?*

She hangs up and tosses her cell phone onto a puppy-shaped pillow on the floor. Paco is Guatemalan, so every once in a while when speaking to him she’ll slyly throw in the odd Spanish word or two, a curse word or even a *dicho*, just to show that yeah,



MICK BLOWS
THE WHUBLER



JANET PLAYS
HER PLANK



CHAZ STILL HAS
HIS FINGER STICKS

O.K., she's lived in New York for what, fifteen years now, but she still knows how to conjugate verbs, knows which nouns are feminine versus masculine. She's not like those Bogotanos she keeps meeting at warehouse raves, those Barranquillan trust-fund babies or Caleña sugarcane-plantation heirs, who spent their whole lives in Houston or Miami and now try to pretend they're bicultural-bilingual when she knows the truth, that they're no better than any common gringo. (Something that she herself most definitely is not. No way. Not a chance. "Gringo" is a word she's always hated, fat and puffy and pastry-shaped in her mouth.) "I'm not the cow that shits the most," she'll say to Paco on the phone, keeping her voice as casual as possible, hands shaking with excitement, or "I'm not the kind of girl who gives away papaya, if you know what I mean."

Paco always responds to her in English, though. It makes her feel strange. Once, she abruptly hung up on him, and when he called back she pretended she'd lost the signal.

She lets herself flop forward onto the bed. Her fashion-history class isn't until 2 P.M. At this point, she usually takes a clonazepam and puts on a YouTube video of a girl showing off what's in her bag or applying concealer to hide her acne. Either that or power through—keep the party going, as Tony said earlier, eyes fixed on her purse as she rapidly zipped it open—take an Adderall and finish her reading, maybe even sketch out some dress designs,

post on her blog. Instead, she just lies there with her eyes closed, fingers tugging gently through her hair, brushing the strands thoughtfully against her mouth.

Paco. Most likely he'd have been in his overcrowded apartment in Queens, a dying potted plant in the middle of the table. There must have been a dead insect somewhere, too, dangling from a dry leaf or something. Paco busy in front of his scales—pouring out, weighing, sorting, maybe even sniffing from time to time, his son crying in the bedroom. He must have knocked the plant with his elbow. Or maybe his kid snuck in while Paco was in the bathroom and started messing around, shaking the plant until its leaves fell off, giggling maniacally. Did that make sense? Was that how it could have happened? Did Paco have to measure it into baggies, or did they arrive as is, neatly lined up in suitcases? Did they come in bulky FedEx packages, bundled in brown packing tape and bubble wrap? In beat-up cardboard boxes? In secret compartments of carry-on athletic bags?

She rolls over and opens the desk drawer. There they are. Snuggling in the yellow envelope he'd handed to her in the Whole Foods parking lot. What once were five now are three. Lined up like stuffed animals, waiting for their turn to be picked up and held. She can't help smiling as she remembers the stuffed-animal sleeping schedule she made when she was little. It took up at least two pages in her purple Barbie diary: three weeks' worth

of plush creatures, a different one every night so that they could all get a turn. Her favorites were Perrito, his Labrador tail sticking out of his candy-cane pants, hand-sewn by Leticia; Chinchilla, with the purple silk ribbon tied tightly around his neck; and Honey Bunny, gray-eared and floppy, smelling faintly of mothballs.

She reaches into the envelope, pulls out a baggie, and automatically starts rubbing it back and forth between her thumb and middle finger, breaking up the chunks inside. Monica at boarding school taught her this trick—dear Monica from Wisconsin, where she'd returned to do both her undergrad and Ph.D. She opens the baggie slowly, but of course there's nothing there that's out of the ordinary. Of course.

From where she's lying, if she slides her eyeballs as far to the left as possible, she can see it: the orange suitcase, sitting placidly on top of her armoire, under the extra sheets and towels she never uses.

The smell hits her hard: the steam of chicken broth bubbling on the stove, warm and salty.

She abruptly shoves the baggie back into the envelope and slams the desk drawer shut. Lies down on the bed, eyes closed and palms pressing against her temples. The back of her throat is still dripping.

She's in the elevator going up to her friend's apartment. The doors close behind her as she unzips her purse with one hand, reaching the other deep inside, her fingers nimbly detecting the sparkly unicorn key chain. The keys rattle slightly as she pulls them out. Her purse today is covered in yawning jaguars, purple and orange and pink, their stitched bodies stretching and leaping across a black cloth background.

As her hand plunges back inside for the baggie, she imagines raging-hot infrared vision blasting from her fingertips, zooming in on the required materials with the expertise of Luke Skywalker's computer detecting the Death Star. All forces ready! Mission accomplished! There it is, hidden in the tiny side pocket, next to her lipstick and lighter. Wrapped in a thin square of toilet paper. She loves keeping

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it tucked away like that, curled up in the darkness like an animal in a cave, taking it with her everywhere she goes, without anybody ever having any idea that it's there. As she pulls it out, the fluttering in her chest moves down to her stomach.

She has already scooped the key inside when she sees it. Half buried in the powder, but unmistakable.

An insect wing. Brown and translucent. Oval-shaped. Faint veins like the underside of a decayed leaf. Like the wings that dangled from the orange flyswatters wielded by the maids back home. What were their names again? Nellie and Rosa. Pastora and Leticia. They'd shake the dead insects into the tanks of tropical fish while she watched, pressing her nose against the glass. The fish would rush toward the surface, mouths plopping open and shut. It got to be so that whenever anybody picked up a flyswatter the fish would go crazy, eyes bulging as they clustered at the surface, frothing the water from their desperate hunger.

The elevator dings and her hand shoots forward, pressing hard on the "close door" button. She pulls out the wing and throws it on the floor, jamming the baggie and keys back into her purse. Before taking her finger off the button, she looks down at the shiny elevator floor. All she sees is a blurry reflection of her Nordstrom high heels, the ones she likes to think of as her Beyoncé shoes. It looks as if she were swimming on the opposite side of a mirror, upside down, shoes barely skimming the surface, on the verge of breaking through to the air above.

At the party, two different girls admire her purse, saying, "That's cute—where did you get it?"

"I'm not sure," she says both times. "It was a gift."

Then she excuses herself to go to the bathroom.

She doesn't mention it to Paco. Not the wrinkled flower petal at the bottom of the third baggie, found as she was crouching behind a tree in Central Park, poking her spit-dampened pinkie finger in for the very last crumbs. Not the Communion wafer in the fourth, sticking out like a sundae decoration. (She remembers the

VERDICT WITH GUITAR

This rising isn't air
but cups and saucers
formed by the roundness
of their own evidence

In the same sense the trees
though not yet guitars
are testimony of their own music,
bending slightly

There are charts
to explain all this,
and circuits, disregarded
by the weight of their separateness

Still, no agency can prevail, no dessert
served. Nothing implied
except circumstances
already broken

And so these used ideas
here worn like clothes
will be compensated, without apology,
by the softest chords of their instrument

—Jim Jarmusch

visiting Jesuit priests bringing tiny plastic bags filled with these bland white disks as gifts, how she would steal them to eat in her room with orange marmalade and feed them unblessed to her dolls, until her grandmother caught her and, with a scandalized frown, put an end to the sacrament.) The fifth one she poured out onto a dinner plate so that she could use her eyebrow tweezers to pick out the crumbling fragments of moss and bark.

She doesn't bring it up—not a word as she sits in Paco's Volvo, her back ramrod straight, squeezing the jaguar purse between her knees, resisting the urge to look for split ends that she can break off with her teeth. Paco's wife is driving them around the Whole Foods parking garage while he digs into his bag in the front seat. His son is sitting next to her, strapped into his car seat. His Spider-Man shirt has a white stain on the front that might be toothpaste, and his eyes are fixed on his Game Boy, birds and pigs flying across the fingerprint-smudged screen.

"So," she says to Paco's son (did he go by Paco, too? Or was it Junior?), "where do you want to go to college? Like, when you grow up?"

"What's that?" he says, eyes still on the Game Boy.

She doesn't ask him any more questions.

"Here you go, *mija*," Paco says, turning around and passing her the yellow envelope. She leans forward and shoves the fistful of bills into his hands. She had it all counted out fifteen minutes before they were supposed to meet, her H&M heels clicking against the concrete floor as she paced.

"I have some Adderall, too, if you're out," he says. "OxyContin. Molly." He lists the names like World Cup team members.

"That's O.K." Now that she has the envelope, all she wants is to get out of the car as soon as possible. He hasn't brought up her voice mail yet, but if he does she has a plan: she'll just say, "Oh, ha-ha, the stuff just wasn't as strong as last time. No big deal, it happens." If

only she could force the door open with her shoulder and roll across the parking-garage floor like an action hero, chin tucked into her chest and arms wrapped around her torso, hugging the envelope close. She has to take a deep breath to stop herself from breaking into a wide grin. Beside her, Paco's son lets out a lusty yawn.

"It was good to hear from you," Paco says as his wife pulls into a parking spot that says "Customers Only." "It'd been a while—I was worried!" He laughs as his wife twists around, unlocking the back door.

She opens her mouth to answer him in Spanish, but the words don't come, her tongue thick and helpless, hesitating against her teeth. So she has to say it in English instead, slowly: "You don't ever have to worry about me."

When she gets out she doesn't shut the car door hard enough, so Paco's wife has to rap on the window and signal for her to do it again. She waits until they've turned the corner before ducking behind a concrete pillar. Her fingernails are too shredded, so she rips the envelope open with her teeth.

Checking one is enough. This time there's a tiny gray drumstick bone, smothered in powder, as if ready to be dropped into spitting-hot frying oil.

It's easy to identify the feeling as she seals the baggie and shoves it back into the envelope. It's an unmistakable sense of relief.

She crawls into bed that night with numb lips, her body shivering, dressed in her lime-green miniskirt and ballerina flats. The apartment has smelled like a smoky wood fire for two days now, with the faint undertone of stale powdered milk. She'd let No. 6 flutter away on the subway tracks (the blast of air from the incoming train made it dance around like a transparent butterfly); No. 7, half full, hibernates for now in her purse, jaguars again.

"You got it from where?" one of her classmates had said at the restaurant. "Wait, did you go there on vacation? You're so brave!"

"I went to Cartagena last year," another one said as the waiter brought a second bottle of wine to the table. "Everyone was *so* friendly."

She reaches for her laptop, pulls it

across the mattress until it bumps against her chin; she tugs the tip of her ponytail into her mouth. Instead of watching a makeup tutorial, though, she starts surfing Google Earth. She can't remember the name of the street she grew up on, but she manages to find the international private school she attended from kindergarten to third grade. There are hardly any blue dots on the screen, linking to street-view photographs, so the tiny orange Google man keeps refusing to be dragged onto the map, rushing stubbornly back to the compass again and again. She clicks on the school Website link and scrolls through pages of photos of three-walled classrooms, the kiosks with palm-thatched roofs, gymnasium murals of floating peace signs and multicolored citizens holding hands. It makes her dizzy. It's the same feeling she gets when she passes Mexican families on the street, speaking rapid slang-filled Spanish, or when Puerto Rican construction workers catcall her with words she doesn't recognize, as if they were speaking to her from a parallel universe, one she should understand but just doesn't. The feeling gets stronger with every photograph she clicks through, the parallel reality brushing up against her, sleazily pressing its weight against her torso, breathing wetly into her ear.

She drags the cursor across the screen, chewing on her hair, clicking on whatever pitiful scattering of dots she can find. It makes her feel as though she were surveying an apocalyptic wasteland, searching for the tiniest signs of life. She finds the traffic light where the black man from the coast sold mango Popsicles and tiny bags of salt out of a Styrofoam cooler; when the school bus stopped, she would lean out the windows with the rest of the kids to hand him a five-hundred-peso coin. She finds the metal gate of the Jewish country club, where her grandmother would take her on weekends for tennis games on red clay courts, swimming lessons, lunches of ham-and-cheese sandwiches brought by a scraggly-haired waitress she secretly called Mafalda, after the comic-book character. She finds the nature park filled with lagoons and herons

and cicada-covered trees, where she would walk her grandmother's poodle in circles, her bodyguard and chauffeur sweating under the acacia and ceiba trees at the entrance, eyes never leaving her.

And then she finds a photo of a gray stone wall with shards of glass jutting along the top and an enormous automatic gate. The country house of one of her classmates. A giant ranch on the city's edge. She zooms in. She went there in kindergarten once for a birthday party—she and her classmates gathered at the airport to take the short helicopter ride. They stayed all day: swimming in an enormous blue-tiled pool, breaking open piñatas hanging from mango trees, chasing each other around angel statues and marble fountains. There were colorful balloons tied to a swing set, and charred-black hot dogs grilled on a barbecue pit. And then there were the animals: a wooden birdhouse full of macaws and peacocks, a parrot that could recite the names of all the players on the national football team, a spider monkey that could kick a football, and a lion that slept in its iron cage all afternoon, no matter how loudly they rattled the bars and shouted. And the rabbits, snuggling in their metal hutch with their nests of knotted white fur, noses nervously quivering. She and her friends pushed blades of grass in between the bars for them to nibble on, calling out, "Hey, little guy, sweet little thing," wiggling their fingers at the blinking pink eyes.

At one point, the birthday girl (Melissa? María?) had come up to her. "If we stand under the drainpipe together," she whispered, "and sing a song to Candy Bird, he'll come visit us." So they stood by the jacaranda bushes, arms linked and faces turned upward, singing the same verse over and over: "Candy Bird, Candy Bird, come see me." And then, as if by magic, candy started raining down from the sky. It hit them on the forehead and cheekbones, coffee-flavored caramels and Milo malt balls, Jet chocolate bars and Bon Bon Bum lollipops. At the sight of the candy, everyone started screaming and ran over, scrambling and diving in the grass, clods of dirt flying. It was like a piñata but better—you couldn't see where it was

coming from. She hadn't hesitated to join in, elbowing others out of the way and scooping up, with grim-faced determination, as much candy as she could carry.

She knows now, of course, that it must have been one of the maids, or maybe the gardeners or chauffeurs, ordered to hide behind a curtain upstairs and throw candy out the window for the guests' amusement. How long had they waited? Standing there and watching the children scream and fight for sweets.

Tracing the spit-soaked tip of her ponytail over her numb lips, she reaches for her computer cord on the floor, the battery icon now a thin red line. By keeping her eyes fixed on the screen, she avoids the possibility of glimpsing the orange suitcase, still resting on top of the armoire.

No matter how many times she zooms in on Google Earth, though, the house remains a blur. All she can see is the fuzzy smears of the mango trees on the other side of the wall and the light glinting off the jagged glass.

She's been waiting for twenty minutes when Paco finally arrives. He's on foot this time, wearing a ragged orange shirt with a giant sweat stain on his chest, the faint shadow of a mustache on his upper lip. They've never stood this close to each other before. Under the fluorescent parking-lot lights, she sees for the first time how pockmarked his skin is, a mess of lines and cracks, as though someone had cut up his face with a pair of blunt scissors and glued it messily back together. She keeps her eyes lowered as she hands over the money. There's a strand of hair stuck between her two front teeth that she can't stop prodding with her tongue.

"Actually," she says after he passes her the envelope, "just wondering. Any chance that you—"

As soon as he nods, she excuses herself to run to the A.T.M. again. *Would you like to view your current account balance before proceeding?* the machine asks, and she jams her thumb against the "no" button again and again until she gets to the withdrawal screen.

"Sorry I was late," he says, handing

over a second envelope. "I had a football game."

"Don't you mean soccer?" Her voice echoes off the concrete ceiling. He raises his eyebrows as she sticks both envelopes in her purse.

"Have a good night, *mija*."

She's still struggling to get the zipper shut as he walks away. When she finally looks up, she catches a glimpse of herself in a nearby car window, mouth twisting as if tasting something bitter.

With No. 11, she uses a sieve to separate out the dry white cracker crumbs. No. 12 requires the tweezers again, to pick out the thin blades of grass. Somewhere in the apartment, her cell phone buzzes with an incoming text message, but she doesn't look up. Her two front teeth keep scraping nervously across her lower lip, peeling off the dead skin; the hair hanging in her face is slick with saliva from constant sucking. If she wraps a strand around her index finger, the crunching sounds as she bites down on it become all the more pleasant—almost like Pop Rocks, or a bowl of Rice Krispies with freshly poured milk.

"Damn Communists," she says in her grandmother's voice, knocking her forehead against the laptop screen as she leans in too close: yet another story about the peace negotiations, men in camouflage pants and black berets standing alongside senators in white shirts. "Why forgive? Why forget?" Google's image search shows rows of eucalyptus trees, fields of sugarcane stretching like the sea (that rotten-egg smell from the fertilizer!). Message boards describe visits tourists can take to coca laboratories hidden in the jungle; Wikipedia lists the departments where most of the cultivation takes place: Putumayo and Caquetá, Meta and Guaviare. YouTube has a documentary about how to set up your own lab. Key ingredients are gasoline and hydrochloric acid; helpful materials include yellow plastic gloves, metal buckets, and black garbage bags full of coca leaves, dark and light green like limes, not a single one brown or withered.

Hours later, she finally checks the phone: "How's it going? XO." The

number isn't saved in her contacts. It takes her a second to remember the Charlie Brown sweater, yellow with a thick jagged black line wrapping around a stomach. She lets the phone fall with a loud clatter, the protective pink case bouncing along the floor.

Charred kernels of grilled corn, burned black and stiff. Squishy black papaya seeds, moist and fresh. The time she told her grandmother, "The fish are all assassinated," assuming it was synonymous with dead, thanks to the newspapers and TV. The cracked sidewalks. The men puckering their lips and making wet kissing sounds. The accordion music blasting from the maids' rooms at the back of the house. "Hurry up," she says to the servants setting the tables, bringing out the boiled eggs spread over toast for breakfast. "What's a paramilitary?" she asks on the playground, arms aching as she hangs from the swing set. "Don't say 'war,'" she lectures the orange suitcase, which eyes her nervously. "Say 'situation.' Say 'insecurity.' Don't say 'kidnapped'—say 'forcibly detained.'"

The seventeenth one she shoves into Tony's hand on the dance floor, not even bothering with the tiny square of toilet paper. She leans against the wall as she waits for him to come back, pulling strands of hair into her mouth as the d.j. starts playing an English version of Shakira's World Cup song. She fingers the clumps of rabbit fur in her purse, torn out of the baggie in white wisps, thick and knotted as if they'd been tangled in cage wire for days.

Just then a hand reaches out and yanks the hair out of her mouth. Saliva streaks across her cheek as though dabbed there by a sloppy paintbrush. Before she can cry out or even protest, Tony speaks close to her ear. "Don't do that," he says. "It's gross."

Her face freezes into what she hopes is a smile. "What?"

He places a hand on the small of her back. "It's really gross," he repeats, "when you do that."

She can't move, can't turn her head, the spit on her face growing cold. Tony has to guide her into the dancing crowd, pulling her by the wrist. Under the flashing strobe lights, his cheeks glow blue, as smooth as a skating rink.

"So," he shouts, loud enough to be sure she can hear him over the booming music, "did your family, like, know Pablo Escobar?"

She stuffs the last yellow envelope in the trash, cramming it down as deep as it will go, the paper crinkling like an accordion. Cradling the last few baggies in her arms, she heads to the bathroom. Leaning over the toilet bowl, she hesitates. Presses her forehead against the tiled wall.

She heads back to her bedroom instead, where she grabs her purses off the floor. Her eyes flick to the top of the armoire.

She yanks the orange suitcase down with a clatter. It's dotted with holes made by a customs agent's drill at J.F.K., fifteen years ago. She'd been too young for the strip search, but old enough to be taken aside into the interrogation room. ("So, do your parents like to party?" the agents had asked. "Ever help them out?") The first latch is a little creaky, but the second flips open with no problem. She knows that the can of Choco Listo cocoa powder won't be there (they poured it out on the table, combing through it with their rubber gloves), nor the pair of Nike soccer cleats (they cut off the rubber tops, searching for hidden compartments).

Everything else, though—it's still there. All of it. The wallet made out of a milk carton, a gift from her bodyguard, thrust into her hands before she climbed into the car to be driven away to the airport, clutching her grandmother's purses in her lap. The wooden toucan that used to sit in the middle of the dining-room table, covered in long white scratches. She pulls out the pink striped alpaca poncho, the folder of papers the lawyers gave her, full of instructions on how to access her trust fund. Pink and purple envelopes, penpal letters covered in glittery Lisa Frank stickers: *I miss you already! How's the big city? Did you know Betsy is moving to Washington, D.C.? When are you coming back to visit?*

When there's only one item left, she pauses, panting. There's no sign of them—no candy-cane pants, no purple silk ribbon, no droopy ears smelling of mothballs. Hand trembling, she reaches for the brown square sitting in the middle of the suitcase's gaping orange mouth.



BATMOM

A battered cardboard box—third-grade geography class. When she holds it close to her ear and shakes it, she can hear the pieces rattling around inside.

She pours them out on the floor and gets to work. They are so flattened that there's no satisfying "click" when they connect. The wrinkled cardboard reminds her of her grandmother's hands, the way they squeezed her shoulders before gently pushing her toward the departure gate. She builds the central mountain ranges first, then the bordering coast, the northern desert, the southern jungle, the eastern plains. Slowly but surely, the shape becomes clear. The snout of Guajira, sniffing the Caribbean; the square tail of Amazonas, poking into Brazil. Cities make up the organs: the Bogotá heart, the lungs of Medellín and Bucaramanga, the kidneys of Cali and Popoyán. Andean mountains ripple like fur, rivers and highways run like veins.

In the end, though, one of the biggest pieces is missing—the department of Meta. The creature is left with a gaping hole at the center of its body, an open wound exposing the floor tiles beneath. She settles back on her heels and looks down.

She'd completely forgotten that more than half of Colombia was jungle.

"Come here, you," she says. "Sweet little things. I won't hurt you—I promise!"

They nuzzle close, warm and soft in her hands as she brings them toward her face. The plastic crinkles when she squeezes them too tightly, so instead she holds them carefully, delicately. She lies down, cradling them against her cheek, smelling their sweet familiar scent, as recognizable and comforting as mothballs. Never mind how much her eyes burn, or her nose itches, or the back of her throat goes numb. She curls up into a fetal position, the wooden toucan poking into her thigh, the puzzle pressing against her arm, the purses softly bunched up under her head. It's all underneath her as she pulls them close, holding them tenderly, whispering sweet nothings. She starts with English—sweetie pie, candy bird, honey bunny—before moving on to half-remembered Spanish: *corazón, querida, mija*.

She closes her eyes.

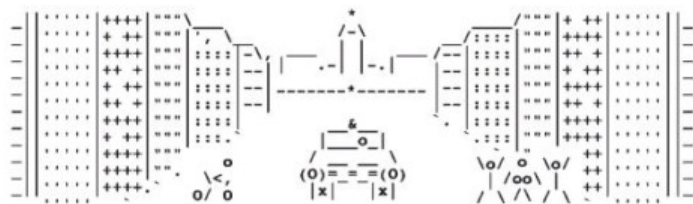
It's not the world's most comfortable nest.

But it's a start. ♦

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Julianne Pachico on "Honey Bunny."

THE CRITICS



THE CURRENT CINEMA

DOING THE RIGHT THING

"Spotlight" and "Trumbo."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The title of the new Tom McCarthy film, *"Spotlight,"* refers to the investigative section of the Boston *Globe*. The main action begins in 2001, with the arrival of a new editor, Marty Baron (Liev Schreiber), lately of the Miami *Herald*. He has lunch with the head of Spotlight, Walter Robinson (Michael Keaton), who tells him, "We're trolling around for our next story," adding that a year or more can be spent on a single case. Recently, the paper ran a column about a local priest who was charged with abusing children; Baron wonders if this was an isolated incident, or if there might be more to dig up. The movie, to put it mildly, has news for us: there's more.

Robinson has a crew of three at his behest: Matty Carroll (Brian d'Arcy James), a quiet family man with a mournful mustache; Mike Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo), pushy and restive, the kind of guy who will never stroll across a street when he can hustle and barge; and Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams). Any film that can make McAdams look resolutely unglamorous is flashing its heavyweight credentials, and *"Spotlight"* gets bonus points for giving her a thrilling scene in which she struggles to load a dishwasher. The movie adheres to the downbeat and the dun, with cheerful colors banished from our sight. The exception is a youthful choir, chanting "Silent Night" in a church ablaze with the trappings of Christmas. Even then, we see Rezendes watching, with a sour expression on his

mug, and clearly thinking, Are these kids safe?

He has a point. The film is a saga of expansion, paced with immense care, demonstrating how the reports of child abuse by Catholic clergy slowly broadened and unfurled; by the time the paper's exposés were first published, in 2002, *Spotlight* had uncovered about seventy cases in Boston alone. (In a devastating coda, McCarthy fills the screen with a list of other American cities, and of towns around the world, where similar misdeeds have been revealed.) The telling of the tale is doubly old-fashioned. First, there are shots of presses rolling and spiffy green trucks carrying bales of the *Globe* onto the streets; we could be in a cinema in 1945. Second, the events take place in an era when the Internet still seems an accessory rather than a primary tool. As the journalists comb through Massachusetts Church directories, looking for disgraced men of God who were put on sick leave or discreetly transferred to another parish, we get closeups of rulers moving down lines of text. Don't expect *"Spotlight"* to play at an IMAX theatre anytime soon.

On balance, this arrant unhipness is a good thing. So crammed are the details of the inquiry, and so delicately must the topic of abuse be handled, that a more intrepid visual manner might have thrown the movie off track, and one of its major virtues is what's *not* there: no creepy flashbacks of prowling priests, or—as in the prelude to

Clint Eastwood's *"Mystic River"*—of children in the vortex of peril. Everything happens in the here and now, not least the recitation of the there and then. You sense the tide of the past rushing in most fiercely during some of the plainest scenes, as *Globe* staffers listen to victims like Joe (Michael Cyril Creighton) and Patrick (Jimmy LeBlanc) explain what they underwent decades before. They are grown men, but they are drowning souls. Boldest of all is the brief appearance of Richard O'Rourke as Ronald Paquin, a retired priest, who answers the door to Pfeiffer and answers her questions with the kindest of smiles. "Sure, I fooled around, but I never felt gratified myself," he says, as if arguing the finer points of doctrine.

"Spotlight" comes across as the year's least relaxing film, thanks to the attention that McCarthy and his fellow-screenwriter, Josh Singer, oblige you to pay. Consider one conversation between Rezendes and a lawyer named Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci), about addenda to court documents. It's so complex that you feel like pausing the action for a quick rewind, yet it has the crunch of truth, all the more so because Garabedian is sitting on a bench and eating from a plastic container while he talks. He's been wading through the issue of pedophile priests, and of the secret legal settlements made by the Church in response, for many years, and Tucci—whose presence in any film, however grim its theme, is guaranteed to lift the heart—does a great job of showing how an obsession, especially a morally compelling one, can stifle a life. ("I never got married," he says. "I'm too busy.")

What matters most about Garabedian, though, is that he's not paranoid, and the movie is uninfected by the noirish unease that drifted through *"All the President's Men."* Even the unseen caller who phones the Spotlight office, or the guy who arrives with a box of hoarded evidence, half-resigned to being dismissed as a crank, turns out to be right, and, as for the knock on the door that Rezendes hears one night, in the throes of the investigation, don't expect a hooded figure standing on the threshold with a scythe. It's only Ben Bradlee, Jr. (John Slattery),

ABOVE: JENNIFER DANIEL



Rachel McAdams, Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, and Brian d'Arcy James play Boston Globe reporters in Tom McCarthy's film.



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the deputy managing editor of the *Globe*, bearing a pizza.

If “Spotlight” feels dogged in its procedure, then why does it exert such command? Because, I think, McCarthy is tackling something more basic than paranoia—namely, pride of place, and the way in which it offers both an embrace and a choke hold. “Born and raised,” Robinson says, when asked if he’s from Boston, and the same rings true, throughout the film, for the hunter and the hunted: for the Spotlight squad, for the fund-raisers at a charity gala, and for the authorities at Robinson’s old high school (across the street from the *Globe*), who harbored an abusive cleric in their midst. And what of the paper’s subscribers, who are fifty-three per cent Catholic? Will they be willing to read of rot in the foundations? Paul Guilfoyle has a wonderful turn as a Bostonian grandee, confident that any unpleasantness can be smoothed away with a hand on the shoulder and a quiet drink. He’s not a monster, or a hypocrite; he’s a decent sort, oiling the wheels of society. To stop them turning, in the interests of justice, takes not only guts but imagination, and that is why Marty Baron, of all people—shy, taut, and humorless, in Schreiber’s clever portrayal—struck me as the hero of the hour. He is mocked for being, as one insider labels him, “an unmarried man of the Jewish faith who hates baseball,” but it is precisely his status as an outsider that allows him to initiate the quest. Folks in the Church, and elsewhere in the city, know what went on, yet they don’t really want to know. It’s all too close to home. Baron wants to know.

For a different stroll down the path of righteousness, try “Trumbo.” Jay Roach’s movie follows the tribulations—and exhausted triumphs—of Dalton Trumbo, one of the deftest of American screenwriters. Even if you don’t recognize his name, you will know his work. The script for “Roman Holiday” (1953), for instance, was largely Trumbo’s creation, but he received no onscreen credit, because he had refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee and was confined to the Hollywood

blacklist. After all, who’d want to watch a romantic comedy about a princess if it was dreamed up by a goddam Commie?

He is played in the film by Bryan Cranston, who nails the natty Trumbo look. Even when he leaves a Kentucky jail, in 1951, having served ten months for contempt of Congress, he emerges in bow tie and hat. More stylish still is his working garb; he likes to write naked, in the bath, with a glass of whiskey, a cigarette in a holder, and reams of paper stacked on a rack across the tub. (This makes him a well-scrubbed match for Waldo Lydecker, the sybaritic wit of “Laura,” from 1944, whose habits were much the same.) Then, there is the ever-rolling stream of his voice. We get the impression, from John McNamara’s script, that Trumbo expressed himself in natural one-liners (“What the imagination can’t conjure, reality delivers with a shrug,” he notes of his prison experience), and you side with his pal Arlen Hird (Louis C.K.) when he pleads with Trumbo, just for once, to shut up.

The story is strewn with bit parts. Michael Stuhlbarg is Edward G. Robinson, who sells a van Gogh to meet the legal costs of the accused; Helen Mirren proves beyond reasonable doubt that Hedda Hopper was pure poison; against all odds, Dean O’Gorman makes a convincing Kirk Douglas (an important role, since Douglas helped to break the blacklist by hiring Trumbo to write “Spartacus”); and John Goodman bullies the movie into life as a producer of schlock, who employs Trumbo—or his pseudonyms—when nobody else will touch him. (The deal is tight: a hundred pages, three days, twelve hundred bucks, cash.) All these characters revolve around Trumbo, but where, exactly, does his story go? He is no more or less principled at the end than he was at the start. The drama is stuck with that ethical rigor, and we are left with a near-heretical irony: thanks to this admiring tribute, our hero gets top billing at last, but was he not more beguiling, somehow, as a legendary figure in the shadows? ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

UNEASY RIDER

Mary Gaitskill's fictions of mastery.

BY ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZ

Is any sin greater, in the parishes of literary fiction, than sentimentality? Novelists pride themselves on using artifice to get at the truth, but sentimentality is all falseness, emotion over-boiled by grandiosity of expression and served up rank and limp. "Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel," James Baldwin wrote in his essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," blasting "Uncle Tom's Cabin." "The wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart." To engineer synthetic emotions for cheap effect is bad enough; even worse, Baldwin says, is the sentimentalist who believes her own schlock, confusing the imitation of emotion for emotion itself.

And yet life is full of excessive emotions and mawkish situations. We know them to be real: how to describe them without seeming fake? It's a question that preoccupies Alison, the middle-aged narrator of Mary Gaitskill's "Veronica" (2005), one of the great American novels of the past decade. In the late eighties, working as a typist at a New York ad agency, Alison was befriended by the title character, a fellow-temp sixteen years her senior. The job lay at the bottom of a steep fall from grace: as a teen-ager, Alison had been plucked from the streets of San Francisco and deposited at the center of Paris's modelling scene, kept in an apartment with an endless supply of marzipan and cocaine until the man doing the keeping grew bored with her. Veronica, by contrast, was a frump of "buzzing ugliness," who lived in a dingy one-bedroom with six Siamese cats.

"So many of Veronica's stories were coarse and sentimental," Alison remembers. Veronica told her about being raped by a man who broke into her New York apartment. She had persuaded him not to kill her by invoking the misery her death would bring her parents:

"And he didn't!" She smoked luxuriously and leaned back in her chair, into the sky



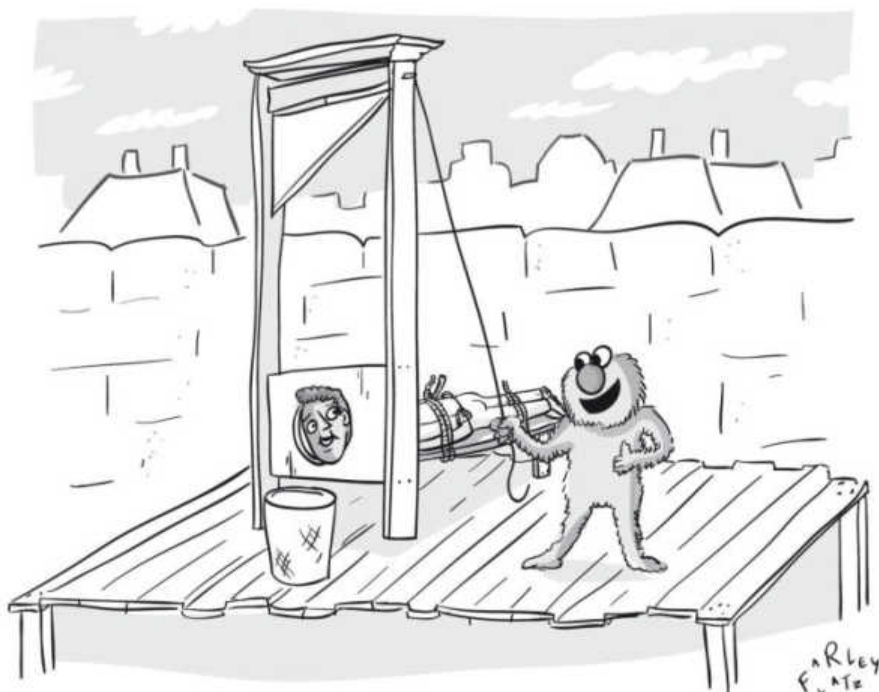
Gaitskill captures the subtle interplay of power and desire.

with red writ across it. "He was very tender." Her voice deepened; it became fulsome, indulgent, almost smug. . . . Smart people would say she spoke that way about that story because she was trying to take control over it, because she wanted to deny the pain of it, even make herself superior to it. This is probably true. Smart people would also say that sentimentality always indicates a lack of feeling. Maybe this is true, too. But I'm sure she truly thought the rapist was tender.

If he'd had a flash of tenderness anywhere in him, a memory of his mother, of himself as a baby, of a toy, she would've felt it because she was desperate for it.

Veronica has a surfeit of experience and feeling, and, if she seems pathetic in the way that she grasps for connection with the person least likely to offer it, that hint of sentimentality is offset by the fierce majesty of her refusal to suppress it—though it takes a certain keenness of perception to see it that way. "Imagine ten pictures of this conversation," Alison says. She is thinking of a discussion with Veronica about modelling, and her friend's declaration that losing her own looks has freed her from the obligation to please anyone but herself. "In nine of them, she's the fool, and I'm the person who has something. But in the tenth, I'm the fool and it's her show now. And for just a second, that's the picture I saw."

By reputation, Mary Gaitskill is a writer not only immune to sentiment but actively engaged in deep, witchy communion with the perverse. That caricature is in large measure due to the notoriety of her first book, "Bad Behavior," a collection of short stories that appeared in 1988, when Gaitskill was thirty-three. The cover features a grainy photograph of a ponytailed woman on her knees, pressing her forearms yogically to the floor while holding her naked ankles up in an invitation to be bound. Among its characters are a young suburban secretary (played by Maggie Gyllenhaal in the movie adaptation) who allows her lawyer boss to spank her in his office; a girl who steals away for a weekend of sado-masochism with a married man; and a Dexedrine addict who amuses himself in lovelorn pursuit of his colleague at a secondhand bookstore on the Lower East Side. The shock of these scenarios has faded in the course of nearly thirty years (the cover image, in the age of American Apparel, seems sweetly decorous), and what stands out now is not so much the squalidness of the sex as Gaitskill's wisdom about what often gets in the



"Everything's more fun with Muppets!"

way of sex—the tendency of the soul to interrupt the body's urges with its own demands for recognition.

Beth, the protagonist of "A Romantic Weekend," the story about the S&M getaway, has assured her new lover that she is an eager masochist, but, as she nervously waits for him on a street corner, a "paroxysm of fantasy" overtakes her. She imagines swooning in his arms like some gauzy thirties film starlet, propped up on a blue powder puff and surrounded by thornless roses as he tells her he loves her. Beth recognizes the insuperable sentimentality of her vision, which does little to stop it from conquering her imagination, flooding the hard, dry place where pain should go. The weekend is a disaster. Her lover, a spiteful sadist devoted to what he had thought to be their mutual project of Beth's humiliation, is bewildered by "her willful, masculine, stupid somethingness," her annoying refusal to be beaten or burned. Beth is bewildered, too; despite herself, she has turned into a person neither submissive nor dominant but an unstable compound of the two.

No writer is sharper about the fickle exigencies of desire. Dominance and submission—the shifting poles that

govern all relationships, not just sexual ones—are Gaitskill's great subjects, carrying her from "Bad Behavior" to her novels "Two Girls, Fat and Thin" (1991) and "Veronica," and through two more story collections, "Because They Wanted To" (1997) and "Don't Cry" (2009). Friends are susceptible to the subtle struggle for appreciation and control just as much as lovers are; children who seek safety in the pillar of their parents' authority when they are young grow up to test it against their own force of will, even at the risk of crushing themselves under its weight.

One such child is Velvet. Velvet Vargas, called Velvet, who appears in Gaitskill's new novel, "The Mare" (Pantheon). When the book opens, Velvet is eleven. She has recently moved from Williamsburg to Crown Heights with her six-year-old brother, Dante, and their mother, Silvia, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic who speaks no English and cannot read or write. It's almost summer; Silvia is nervous about the new neighborhood, black rather than Spanish, and suspicious of what Velvet might get up to now that school is out. "Because I was stupid she

couldn't trust me to stay inside and not go around the block talking to men," Velvet hears her tell a social worker. She knows that the message is meant for her ears; Silvia, affectionately protective of her young son, treats her daughter with a reflexive, mocking harshness that invades Velvet's mind like some choking weed: "You're no good, said some words in my head. It's not your fault, it's your blood that's bad."

The solution is two weeks upstate with the Fresh Air Fund—an unpromising escape, to judge by the pair of white chaperones Velvet overhears at the Port Authority on the morning of her departure, congratulating themselves on their charity in poisonously smug terms. "They come up and they see this big house and all these nice things, and they want to know, How do you get all this?" one woman tells the other. "And I say to them, We get it with *hard work*." But the couple waiting for Velvet displays no symptoms of a noble-savior complex. Paul and Ginger live modestly in faculty housing at the college where Paul teaches, next door to a small horse barn where Ginger offers to take Velvet for lessons. Paul has a daughter from his first marriage, while Ginger, nearly a decade younger, at forty-seven, has no children or career of her own. Before meeting Paul, in A.A., she lived in downtown Manhattan, an unsuccessful painter embroiled in a series of brutal relationships. Her mother and her sister have both recently died. She thinks that fostering a child might give her a sense of what it would be like to adopt, to inhabit the adulthood she has long delayed; her first glimpse of Velvet ripples with a new mother's immediate tenderness. "She smiled like she was seeing heaven," Velvet observes, a little skeptically.

A white woman who yearns to nurture her way to redemption; a Latina girl who needs shelter from poverty and abuse—the premise bristles with the peril of sentimentality, as Ginger knows. "I felt excited and scared about how to act—I couldn't even respond properly to my own family, so how could I take care of a needy child from another culture? It was a cliché to think that way, but I could feel her difference," she thinks. On the obverse side of the cliché, though, leans a formulaic

posture of dismissal that blocks the possibility of any truer response. Gaitskill observes the way that Ginger's acquaintances squirm and scoff as her relationship with Velvet deepens, first during the Fresh Air Fund weeks, and then in a series of regular phone calls and visits that extend over three years. "Sounds like an easy way to play at being a parent," Becca, Paul's imperious first wife, tells her. At an A.A. meeting, a friend from her derelict Manhattan days "put on her program face and said, 'It sounds like you're really wanting to nurture yourself. I think you need to be looking at your own shit.'" Even Paul accuses her of slipping into the part of "white benefactor."

The idea that Ginger sees Velvet as a way to flatter her own vanity is simpler to grasp than the notion that she might be moved by a love as profound and intractable, in its way, as a real mother's. Paul senses the "whiff of addiction" in Ginger's devotion to Velvet, and it's true that there's an unsettling neediness both to the urgency of her love and to her wish to prove herself adequate at loving. In nine out of ten pictures, she's as the others think she is: a well-intentioned fool playing at being a parent to someone else's kid. But in the tenth she's as she knows herself to be—a woman who loves a child with all the confusion and ferocity that such love entails. That's the picture that Gaitskill projects, illuminating Ginger, lantern-like, from within the space of her own mind.

Gaitskill, too, had a rough and damaged youth; she, too, got married in her forties to a professor, moved to upstate New York, and has fostered children from the Fresh Air Fund. But she keeps clear of the self-justifying temptations of fiction embedded with memoir by structuring "The Mare" as a series of short chapters delivered in the first person, slicing deftly among her characters' various points of view. Paul and Silvia have a say, but the leading roles are Ginger's and Velvet's—a risky strategy, since it requires a kid's voice that can match an adult's in lifelike tone and psychological depth. Velvet, fortunately, is that most wonderful of fictional creations: a convincing child who manages to be a captivating and perceptive narrator. Here she is at eleven,

overhearing an argument between Ginger and Paul that she senses involves her: "It felt like at the bus station, only harder to understand. Like I was in the Alice in Wonderland story where she is really, really tiny and then really, really big, like I was something tiny in their house and huge at the same time." And here she is at twelve after running into her crush at a party in Bushwick, her inner register expanded and sharpened to reflect the change from childhood to adolescence:

I just sat and felt Dominic's leg like it was breathing his life into my leg, up into my whole body. What they talked about after that didn't matter. I was just breathing in life. When we walked out of the room, Alicia and Helena gave me eyes like they did not know who I was and hated me anyway. But I didn't care. Dominic was walking in front of me. He had his arm around Sondra, but he turned his head to look at me. And his look was not candy. It was tight and hot, joking and serious. Like a song I never heard before.

This is language powerfully expressive in its intuition. Gaitskill shows Velvet coming up with new words and phrases to put to new feelings, hitting on formulations ("tight and hot"; "breathing in life") that are believable both for the fresh simplicity of their diction and for the electric sophistication of the observations that they convey.

"The Mare" is indebted, in its narrative strategy, to "As I Lay Dying," another novel that employs a host of recurring narrators to get at the tangled intricacies of family life. There is a certain loom-like effect at work in both books, a warp-and-woof texture, visible only to the reader, produced by the interwoven sets of impressions. When Velvet first arrives upstate, Ginger's excitement is balanced by Velvet's wariness that Ginger "was smiling like she knew me and she did not." Before long, she begins to trust Ginger, and although Ginger senses the shift, she can't see, as we can, the precise moment it occurs (when she shows up at the barn to watch Velvet at a riding lesson), or how Velvet phrases it to herself: "Just all of a sudden, it made sense, her being there, me being with her. I don't know why. But I got it. It was like I was looking at puzzle pieces all over

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the floor that magically got snapped into place and I went, *Oh, okay.*"

This is how intimacy between two people is formed: in fits and starts, and at different speeds. And this is how it continues, private worlds approaching and receding from one another in unpredictable orbits. As Velvet's relationship with Ginger deepens, she starts to look for its seams. "Velvet knew all about weakness and power, and it felt like she was pressing on my weak spot, just to see what would happen," Ginger thinks, after Velvet has asked her about a woman she's seen with Paul, sensing, before Ginger does, that something is amiss. "She didn't push it; she didn't have to. She was just letting me know she saw it. And that she was curious about it."

And so we are back in familiar Gaitskill territory, watching the cunning dance of dominance and submission unfold. Velvet's challenges to Ginger stem, in part, from the adolescent instinct to test the true force of the adult authority that she depends on to protect her, and she is reassured to find it responsive and intact; there can be a great relief in not getting away with things. But she also wants to show Ginger where the limits of her power lie, to let her know that for all her nurturance—the phone calls to her teachers to check on her progress, the encouragement and emotional support—she isn't her mother. "I felt like saying to Ginger, *See, we laugh,*" Velvet thinks, during a rare moment of domestic peace in Brooklyn. Silvia's authority is a matter of brute force: she pummels Velvet for sneaking out of the house at night, for taking bread before dinner is served, for talking back, or, on one terrible occasion, for gazing in open pleasure at musicians on a subway platform, punishing her for exactly the quality that Ginger most prizes: "You stupid girl, you give everything away! In front of people!" Silvia knows the cost of female weakness in her world, and her pedagogy is accordingly cruel. To make Ginger feel her authority, Velvet hardens herself. She threatens Silvia by seeming soft.

In the classic novel of adoption, the protagonist's origins are dispensed with or obscured. Heathcliff is discovered parentless on the streets of Liverpool; Oliver Twist is orphaned from

infancy. Without parental interference, the hero is free, for better or worse, to form himself. Velvet is presented with two opposite parental models, neither entirely viable, and, as she struggles to negotiate between them, Ginger and Silvia compete for influence, sussing each other out. "She sat in her body like it was a tank," Ginger thinks when she meets Silvia. Silvia's appraisal of Ginger: "She lives in the sky. She's nice like a little girl is nice."

Their greatest power struggle takes place around the question of horses. As soon as Velvet begins to take riding lessons, it's clear that she's a natural equestrian. Silvia is sure that she'll fall and kill herself, and refuses to grant permission for her to ride; Ginger, delighting in Velvet's skill and the transformative potential of her obvious excellence, secretly overrules her.

Velvet is drawn, in particular, to a mare with the unfortunate name of Fugly Girl, so called because of her scarred face and skittish, aggressive nature, marks of an earlier life of abuse. Velvet has been given her name for a reason, too—"The Mare" bears an epigraph from "National Velvet," the story of a fourteen-year-old rider who triumphs at the Grand National Steeplechase—and the tough girl, unsurprisingly, turns out to have a way with the tough beast. "You control them from inside their heads," Beverly, one of Velvet's riding instructors, tells her. "The physical is backup. Mostly." Later, she expands on the thought: "You make a horse great by making it feel like shit. Because it knows it is *not* shit and it will turn itself inside out to prove it to you."

But Velvet has no interest in Beverly's methods. She has an intuitive sense for horses from the moment she first enters the barn, interpreting their "talking" noises as easily as human speech. As soon as she begins to learn how to ride, that intuition becomes corporal, and one of the great pleasures of Gaitskill's novel is reading about the power of the female body in ecstatic communion with another animal: "We warmed up, walk, trot, canter, and even though we were going in different directions and not following nobody, it was like we were together at the *stomach*. . . I could feel her hap-

piness like I can smell *perfume*." This is domination of the right kind: one animal showing another the right way to move.

The temptation of other worlds pulses through each of Gaitskill's novels. In "Veronica," Alison throws herself into the European modelling scene to break with the stultifying normalcy of her suburban family life. Dorothy, one of the heroines of "Two Girls, Fat and Thin," assaulted by her father as a teen-ager, latches onto the dime-store objectivist philosophy shilled by an Ayn Rand-like figure and flees her parents' home to join the movement. Both worlds turn out to be disastrously superficial, beautiful bubbles made to burst. Velvet's life upstate is a genuine refuge, but it doesn't come free from isolating cost. If Ginger's house isn't quite home, neither, anymore, is Silvia's, and Fugly Girl is a further degree removed from either reality. "Being on the mare happened on another planet, someplace beautiful but with outer space all around it," Velvet thinks. "I couldn't even tell it to anybody. I was locked away from everybody. I couldn't even beat on the door because there was no door." It's a terribly lonely feeling; a liberating one, too. On horseback, Velvet is in her own, untouchable place, and Gaitskill's sentences lift their necks and pick up speed to match her movements stride for stride:

In our eyes and our skin we felt the night. I felt her fear of it, felt her start to walk backward, and I turned her in a circle to the indoor ring. She calmed and let me take her there, but when I turned on the light, birds flew in the rafters and again she walked backward. I forgot how big she is and pulled her like a dog on a leash, and—damn!—she reared up and beat the air with her feet, killing hard. The lead line burned through my hands, but I held it, and she came down and I turned her in a circle, two, three times. She followed, and I felt our minds pressed together, each feeling where the other was. ♦

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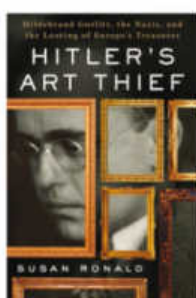
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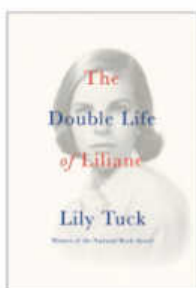
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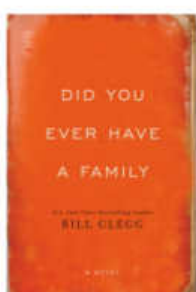
CLEMENTINE, by *Sonia Purnell* (Viking). This biography of Winston Churchill's wife, Clementine, argues that her influence has been underrated. True, the marriage often looked like a disaster, with fights after which Clementine might disappear for weeks. Yet Purnell makes the case that the relationship was the key to Churchill's character and his leadership during the Second World War. Clementine's singular focus on her husband meant that her great fear for her own children was that they would embarrass him, and they frequently did. Clementine seemed, to observers, to be less fond of her son, Randolph, than of his wife, Pamela, who remembered that only Clementine could say no to Winston, "and she did that often, often, often, often."



HITLER'S ART THIEF, by *Susan Ronald* (St. Martin's). In 2012, some fourteen hundred art works, including modernist masterpieces, were discovered in a Munich apartment. In this investigative history, Ronald traces the cache to its curator, Hildebrand Gurlitt, a museum director with Jewish roots who became an unlikely Hitler henchman. Some of the story is familiar: Hitler the artist manqué sent connoisseurs across Europe to loot museums and private collections. The book's strength is its riveting portrait of Gurlitt, who detested the Nazis, and stole from them, but did their bidding in the name of "saving modern art." Fooling the Allied Monuments Men at war's end, Gurlitt failed to return the looted art to its rightful owners, and the battle to establish provenance continues today.



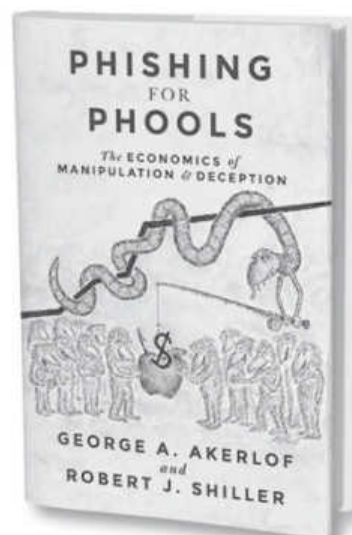
THE DOUBLE LIFE OF LILIANE, by *Lily Tuck* (Atlantic). Mixing family lore, historical events, and photographs, this autobiographical novel creates a portrait of the writer as a young woman. Liliane is the daughter of Rudy, a German-born Jewish film producer living in Rome, and Irène, a charismatic woman who has married an American Navy veteran and now lives in New York. In a non-chronological, matter-of-fact fashion, the reader learns of Irène and Liliane's sojourn in Peru to escape war in Europe; of Rudy's friendship with Josephine Baker; and of a strange afternoon a teen-age Liliane spends with a lecherous Alberto Moravia. The anecdotes are enlivening, but sometimes undercut by potted history and a leisurely approach to narrative.



DID YOU EVER HAVE A FAMILY, by *Bill Clegg* (Scout Press). In this debut novel, grief is compounded by the inability to express it. Set in small-town Connecticut, the novel begins with a devastating event in the life of a woman named June Reid: early on the morning of her daughter's wedding, a fire destroys the house in which June's boyfriend, her ex-husband, and the bride and groom are all sleeping. Split into short chapters, the novel is narrated mostly by friends and neighbors, who speculate about the fire's cause and tot up the missteps of their own muddled emotional lives. Clegg finds a rugged simplicity in the characters' voices, but rarely achieves a more searching portrayal of a community in shock.

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PAST PEAK

Electronic dance music finds its limits.

BY CARRIE BATTAN

*Even the genre's most notable d.j.s need vocalists, like Ellie Goulding, to reach radio.*

Last year, “Saturday Night Live” ran a video online poking fun at the culture of electronic dance music. The bit features Andy Samberg as a preening d.j. named Davvincii, who has the ability to whip a crowd into a frenzy by doing virtually anything except play music. He stands behind the decks, as an ominous beat percolates in the background, and proceeds to fry an egg, build a Jenga tower, play computer games, and collect bags of money from men in suits—all in anticipation of the moment when he’ll hit a large red button labelled “BASS.” When he finally pushes the button—or drops the bass, in the parlance of the genre—the audience members are so excited that

their heads literally explode, gore and mayhem spewing across the dance floor.

The skit is a delightfully brutal encapsulation of the widespread amusement and fear that have greeted bass-heavy electronic music in the United States. The past decade has seen various strains of dance music—dubstep and Eurodance, in particular—migrate from Europe and get boiled down to their most elemental forms. The result has been a profitable union of youth, d.j.s, night clubs, and festivals, along with a type of music that feels less like a genre than like a phenomenon. (“E.D.M.” is a maddeningly broad term, but it’s a helpful way to describe the crudest of dance music: songs that rely

almost exclusively on carefully deployed crescendo to achieve maximum impact.) For anyone prone to cynicism about the future of culture, the rise of this kind of music implies that audiences can be controlled by nothing more than hair-trigger sensitivities to shifting bass and volume levels. It’s also an easy target for those who decry the decline of musical virtuosity, especially in the live arena. Even Deadmau5, a prominent Canadian d.j., admitted to *Rolling Stone* that most of his peers are just “button-pushers” onstage, setting off a miniature maelstrom in the d.j. community.

Despite E.D.M.’s ability to transfix crowds, obvious limits to its power have emerged. Even the genre’s most notable d.j.s need shepherds to guide them beyond night clubs and festivals onto the radio and into broader consciousness. Instrumental dance tracks virtually never ascend the charts; producers need singers for lubrication. One of these shepherds is Ellie Goulding, a twenty-eight-year-old British singer who has displayed little regard for traditional genre boundaries. On the brink of stardom for most of her career, Goulding shifts modes frequently and easily. On her first two albums, “Lights” (2010) and “Halcyon Days” (2012), she cycles skillfully through iterations of soul, electropop, and rock. Her voice is high and slightly nasal—it can sound as if she were getting over a cold while recording—and easily manipulated, digitally, to fit a given song. At times, she plays a dramatic balladeer, in the mold of Adele; at other moments, she sings understated folk or smoldering R.&B. At her best, she makes frosty synth-pop that points toward Heaven, replete with soaring choruses and intricate electronic twinkling that fills up dramatic empty space; on these numbers she sounds as if she could be a distant cousin of both Kate Bush and Florence and the Machine. But, in trying to sound like everyone, Goulding sometimes ends up sounding like no one.

Goulding is, technically, a pop star—she has had a steady presence on the Billboard charts and on the major festival circuit since 2012—but in the U.S. she has yet to generate a passionate army of fans. She is rarely the subject of tabloid gossip; she doesn’t get into

trouble, and when she does we tend not to pay much attention. Because Goulding, despite the enormous popularity of her songs, is not a household name, she serves as a counterpoint to the argument that pop music has become purely a game of celebrity. In other words, she is the perfect match for the world of E.D.M.—malleable, clear-voiced, and anonymous.

Two of Goulding's most popular songs have arrived in the form of a partnership with Calvin Harris, a Scottish house d.j. who broke into the U.S. mainstream with collaborations. In 2013, Harris used Goulding on a blaring, fist-pumping single called "I Need Your Love." Last year, he enlisted her for his single "Outside," which reaches a dizzying peak with the help of a highly digitized orchestra. Unless you're paying close attention, you might have trouble telling the two songs apart. Both cracked the top thirty of the Billboard Hot 100, but did little to add distinction to Goulding's career. These kinds of productions, which fill giant rooms but rarely invite examination, tend to anonymize the humans riding on their backs.

On "Delirium," her new album, Goulding aims to amplify her popularity by streamlining her sound. "A part of me views this album as an experiment—to make a big pop album," she told *NME*. "I made a conscious decision that I wanted it to be on another level." She sheds many of her old modes in order to focus on dance-pop. D.j.s like Harris are absent, but the songs are reverent of the style they've helped popularize. Even the gentlest of these tracks—like "Lost and Found," which begins with quiet acoustic strumming and a spare kick drum—build to a frantic climax within a couple of minutes. "Around U," a sweet and fizzy respite from the maximalist dance-pop of the rest of the album, finds Goulding proudly declaring her infatuation. "I just want to be around you/Is that too much to ask?" she sings, like a member of a fifties girl group whose backup singers have been digitally crunched, thickened, and folded into a spinning whirligig. Goulding sometimes nods directly to the dance floor: one song is called "Keep On Dancin'." Here, despite the song's exuberant messaging,

she sounds numb and downcast. This is an album that strives for greatness but will settle for competence.

It can be difficult to tell exactly who benefits from the commingling of dance d.j.s with vocalists from other realms. E.D.M. can serve as a safe haven for artists who have lost their place in the mainstream. Rappers like Waka Flocka Flame and Lil Jon have revitalized their careers by dabbling in the genre, while a number of pop performers resemble Goulding, singing on wildly popular dance tracks but still languishing in relative anonymity. The British electro-soul duo AlunaGeorge, for instance, scored a hit in the U.S. only when the Vegas club regular DJ Snake remixed one of their old singles, while vocalists like Jess Glynne and MØ boast popular collaborations with dance acts but hardly any American name recognition. Dance music has proved to be compatible with nearly anyone. Earlier this year, a mellow reggae song from 2012 by the Jamaican singer OMI became an unlikely summer smash hit after being remixed by the German house d.j. Felix Jaehn.

Dance d.j.s need the vocalists as much as, if not more than, the vocalists need them. Skrillex and Diplo, once titans of wobbly big-room electronica, have slowly moved closer to the center of the pop mainstream, sanding their edges down and teaming up as Jack Ü. Their 2015 collaboration with Justin Bieber, "Where Are Ü Now," is a triumph of melody and experimentation, not force. Avicii, the Swedish house d.j. who helped inspire the "S.N.L." short, has turned away from the approach that earned him the title "king of oontz-oontz-oontz." "Stories," an album he released this fall, is deliberately subtle and melodic. It's also full of vocalists.

E.D.M. has not overtaken culture in the way that was feared; instead, it has put a twist on an old model. It approaches the traditional relationship between a producer and a pop star from a slightly different angle, creating a parallel pop universe that looks a lot like the old one, but with more bass, stranger instrumental flourishes, and fewer sex symbols. Rather than smash everything in its wake, E.D.M. has curled itself around finicky pop impulses. The result will make heads nod along, not explode. ♦



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BIG IDEAS

A Frank Stella retrospective.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

*"Effingham II" (1966). Stella's swagger made him a god of the sixties art world.*

The Frank Stella retrospective at the Whitney Museum will likely provoke varied opinions, on a scale from great to god-awful. The crowded installation of huge abstract paintings, reliefs, sculptures, and painting-sculpture hybrids, augmented by works on paper, tracks the New York artist's fifty-seven-year career. At the start is the deathly glamour of Stella's Black Paintings—bands in matte enamel, separated by fuzzy pinstripes of nearly bare canvas—which shocked everyone with their dour simplicity when they appeared in a show at the Museum of Modern Art, in 1959. Those works, which Stella began making when he was a senior at Princeton, amounted to tombstones for Abstract Expressionism and heralds of minimalism. The new show ends with one crazy-

looking mode after another, mostly in the form of wall-hung constructions, created since the early nineteen-seventies. In between are too few of the swaggering compositions—of target-like concentric stripes, designs based on compasses and protractors, and shaped canvases that echo the shapes painted on them—that made Stella a god of the sixties art world, exalting tastes for reductive form, daunting scale, and florid artificial color. His impact on abstract art was something like Dylan's on music and Warhol's on more or less everything.

Nothing that Stella has made since exercises such authority. His last works to cause much critical stir, dating from the early seventies, extend the lexicon of his shaped canvases to reliefs of angled planes, made from wood and

covered with colored paper, corrugated cardboard, and felt. The surfaces are seductive, seen close up, and the configurations are majestic, all but flying across the wall, when beheld from a distance. The works suggest a racy rebirth of Cubism, but trends in post-minimalism and conceptualism were taking center stage in the art world at that time, and Stella's ripostes were strained. In the mid-seventies, he opened up his painting to actual space by fragmenting it into floating cutout metal shapes that he slathered with paint and sometimes glitter: disco modernism, you could call the work, but it's more strenuous than ecstatic. There followed ever more aggressive free-form assemblies of jutting planes, twisted pipes, cones and cylinders, and hectic brushwork, the effect of which was like very loud music that has neither tune nor tone.

In "Working Space," a book derived from a series of lectures that Stella delivered at Harvard in the early eighties, he framed his new work as an answer to a crisis in abstract painting. He saw a precedent in Caravaggio's invention, in around 1600, of Baroque spatial illusion, in which the space in a picture appears continuous with the space outside it. But Stella's theory proved more gripping than his practice. Caravaggio, in service to the militant piety of the Counter-Reformation, devoted his dramatic style to fervently envisioned religious content, such as the appearance of the risen Christ at Emmaus. The story told and the manner of its telling conjoin in Caravaggio's work. Stella's fealty to abstract art as a cause and an ideal—the only content that his art allows—can seem remarkably frail by comparison. It led him into willful eccentricities that may raise unkind questions about the cogency of his early triumphs.

Stella was precocious and exceedingly well schooled, qualities that are now the norm but which were rare among earlier generations of American modern artists, whose routes to fame tended to be serpentine. He was born in 1936 and grew up in Malden, Massachusetts. His father was a gynecologist, his mother a housewife who had attended design school. They both liked to paint. Stella graduated from Phillips Academy, Andover, where his classmates included Carl Andre, whose sculpture

later came to define minimalism. Stella immersed himself in art history and was inspired by sophisticated elders, including Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr., a painter who was the director of the nearby Addison Gallery of American Art. Hayes promoted the art of two German-American painters who were also pedagogues: the proto-Abstract Expressionist Hans Hofmann, who had his own school in New York, and the Bauhaus-nurtured color theorist Josef Albers, at Yale. Stella absorbed a bias for painting as a systematic and even calculated enterprise. His good fortune in mentors followed him to Princeton, where he was encouraged by Stephen Greene, a minor painter and legendary teacher. A visit to New York in 1958 introduced him to Jasper Johns's sensationally phlegmatic paintings of flags and targets, a model that he tentatively adapted to large-scale abstraction. Then came the Black Paintings, which, besides rocketing him to fame, promulgated a new idea of what art can do and, more to the point, what it can do without.

The idea—of painting limited to its essential means—was powerfully espoused by the critic Clement Greenberg, and was further refined by Michael Fried, an art historian and critic who was Stella's classmate at Princeton. Fried championed Stella and other artists, notably Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski, who hewed to Greenberg's doctrine of modernist painting as progressive art for art's sake. "Frank Stella's new paintings investigate the viability of shape as such," Fried wrote in an influential essay, "Shape as Form," in 1966. Such thumping rhetoric, here with a

faintly bizarre metaphor of paintings performing like a team of detectives, typifies the confidence of what came to be called "formalist" art and thought. The issues involved, which led Fried to attack the bluntness of most minimalist art as vulgarly "theatrical," were esoteric but, for those in the know, galvanizing. In those days, serious critics could still at least seem to exert real worldly power. Leo Castelli, whose Olympian gallery Stella joined in 1959, took careful note of their tendencies, even as he began to eclipse them as the pilot of a soaring art market that didn't trouble itself with theoretical distinctions.

Stella's cynosure then, and perhaps his problem now, was a coolness beyond cool. In a telling passage from "Working Space," he recounts a youthful misgiving about the grand masters of Abstract Expressionism, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, whom he revered. He writes, "I sensed a hesitancy, a doubt of some vague dimension which made their work touching, but to me somehow too vulnerable." The older artists had established New York as the imperial court of artistic innovation. It was time for their heirs to start behaving with an impunity befitting emperors. The stars of Pop and minimal art did so, though in most cases with some degree of irony. Warhol's Factory poked fun at itself as a cottage-industry miniature of commercial mass culture. Minimal art related itself to new forms of public space—corporate lobbies and plazas, airports, malls, and freeways, synopsized in white-box galleries—which seemed to render obsolete the contemplation of discrete pictures and sculp-

tures. But Stella wanted to maintain the grandeur of post-Renaissance Western painting, updated through the elimination of the muss and fuss of religion, politics, psychology, and other all-too-human weaknesses.

I don't know what to make of Stella's later works. His most famous apothegm—"What you see is what you see"—is no help, if seeing is supposed to imply comprehending. Looking is futile except as an inspection of the wizardly ways in which Stella made the works, with welds, flanges, castings, and, increasingly, computer-generated patterns. Always, there are self-consciously poetic titles, a habit of Stella's since he gave the Black Paintings names like "Die Fahne Hoch!" ("The Flag on High!," from a Nazi anthem) and "The Marriage of Reason and Squalor II." In the eighties and nineties, he made works referencing the hundred and thirty-five chapters of "Moby-Dick." The titles function as apostrophes of meaning. Meaning exists. It's just not "what you see," except through tortuous efforts of association.

Stella made a permanent difference in art history. He is extraordinarily intelligent and extravagantly skilled. But his example is cautionary. Even groundbreaking ideas have life spans, and Stella's belief in inherent values of abstract art has long since ceased to be shared by younger artists. His ambition rolls on, unalloyed with self-questioning or humor. The most effective installations of Stella's later works that I have seen are in corporate settings, where they can seem to function as symbols of team spirit. Rather than savoring his work now, you endorse it, or not. ♦

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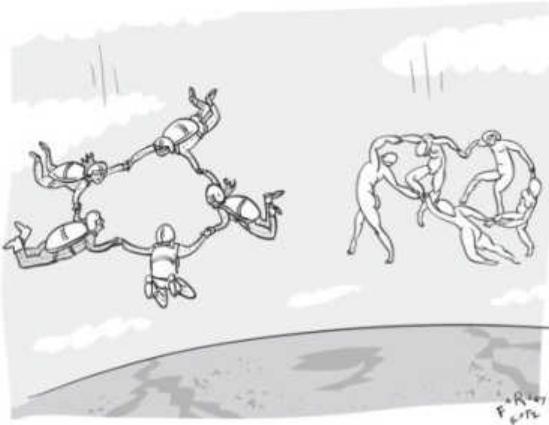
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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Zachary Kanin, must be received by Sunday, November 8th. The finalists in the October 26th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 23rd issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Matisse now; Pollock later."
Mark Laurent Asselin, Bethesda, Md.



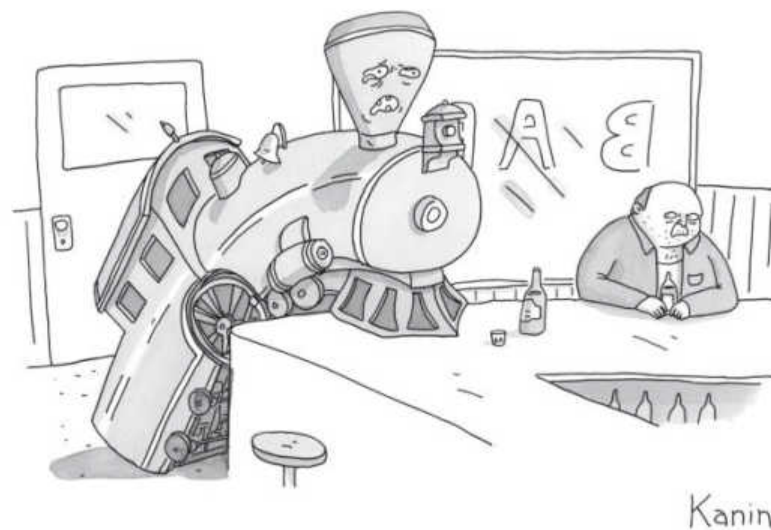
THE FINALISTS

"Due to financial difficulties, several board members have taken on additional duties."
Reino Hill, Ashland, Wis.

"Look busy."
Fred Leonard, Prescott, Ariz.

"I move for less transparency."
Zachary Phelps, Oak Harbor, Wash.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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